

# **EXHIBIT 244**

## **PART 1 OF 2**



# THE LONDON BOMBINGS

MARC SAGEMAN

# **THE LONDON BOMBINGS**

MARC SAGEMAN

**PENN**

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PHILADELPHIA

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## CHAPTER 3

### THESEUS

#### THE LONDON BOMBINGS

**UNLIKE THE INDIVIDUALS BEHIND** the other three plots, the perpetrators of the London bombings killed themselves in the July 2005 attack and could not provide firsthand information about their attack at trial. I have reconstructed this attack from testimonies of their former friends at their respective trials, the transcripts of their conversations entered into evidence at the Khawaja trial in Canada, the formal parliamentary investigations into the bombings, and the 2011 Coroner's Inquests.

#### The Beeston Boys

Let us go back to the mysterious militants from Beeston, who had associated with Khyam in the previous chapter. Beeston is a Leeds neighborhood where another cluster of young British Islamist militants emerged. It is a largely residential, close-knit, and densely populated area with back-to-back rowhouses, often in poor condition. The population is ethnically mixed and transitory in nature. There are a number of mosques, a large, modern community center, and a large park, where young people play football and cricket. The area is relatively deprived, and in the early years of this century the average income was low—more than 10,000 of the 16,300 residents at the time had living standards that were among the bottom 3 percent nationally. But there was little to distinguish this neighborhood from many other poor areas of Britain's other big cities.<sup>1</sup>

The majority of Muslims in the area were Barelvis from Mirpur in Pakistan Kashmir, who had created a Kashmir Muslim Welfare Association (KMWA) in the early 1980s to help their elders, teach their youths about Kashmiri traditions and religion, and establish a mosque. The KMWA moved to a Hardy Street building, where the second floor was the mosque. However, its imams spoke Urdu and Punjabi, which the second generation had trouble understanding. Instead of their parents' tradition, some youngsters gravitated to a Salafi version of Islam, whose brochures and writings were in English, funded by Saudi money. Barelvis worship the Prophet and Muslim saints while Salafis see this type of worship as heresy—only God, or Allah, is worthy of worship. The Salafis in Beeston established their own mosque, Al Madina Mosque, on Tunstall Road.

As Beeston was experiencing a serious drug problem, the KMWA created a youth center with a gym in the basement of its building. The local youths had complained that there was no facility for them like a gym, a place to relax, or a drop-in learning center.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the association established two part-time positions of youth workers with council money in 1996 and hired two young Muslims from the neighborhood: Mohammed Sidique Khan<sup>3</sup> and Mohammed Shakil.

Sidique was 22 years old, born in Leeds into a modest Pakistani immigrant family. He was generally a quiet boy in school with occasional flares of illegal activity, such as receiving stolen goods in 1986 and assault in 1992.<sup>4</sup> He became interested in religion as a teenager, but still drank and smoked cannabis. After school, he worked locally for the Benefits Agency and then as an administrative assistant for the Department of Trade and Industry. In September 1996, he started at nearby Leeds Metropolitan University.<sup>5</sup> At the time, he was not yet a practicing Muslim and was more concerned about taking the drug problem in his neighborhood head on.<sup>6</sup>

Mohammed Shakil was 20 years old, born in Kashmir, where he contracted polio, resulting in his left leg being about an inch shorter than the right. He came to England at the age of five and wore leg braces in primary school. His family moved to Beeston in 1988. In secondary school, Shakil replaced his brace with a built-up shoe. He liked to dance, hopping on one leg, and acquired a reputation as a "professional hip hop dancer."<sup>7</sup> In 1995, he married Najma Saleem, whose family came from the same village but had moved to Beeston in 1981. Sadeer Saleem, her younger half brother, was born in England in 1980 and went to the same school as Shakil, but they did not socialize as Shakil was four years older. In 1996, Shakil's



medical condition deteriorated. He was unable to walk even very short distances, developed chronic fatigue and poor sleep, and was treated for depression.<sup>8</sup> As he improved, he got the job at the Hardy Street youth center.

Shakil and Sidique became close friends, hung out and drank together, and visited each other's homes. In their job, they dealt with the local drug problem, urging the youth to "get off the streets" and bringing them inside the center to play pool, board games, and tennis or use the weightlifting equipment. The goal was to raise community awareness while addressing drug problems. The club attracted local boys like Saleem, Shehzad Tanweer, and Shipon Ullah. Tanweer was born in 1982 in Bradford and two years later his family moved to Beeston, where it owned a fish-and-chips shop. He did well in school and was a gifted sportsman, excelling at cricket. His father called him Kaka (the little one, but his friends called him Kaki) and he lived on the same street as Ullah, born in Bangladesh in 1983. Ullah's family moved to Beeston in 1986 but a year later both parents died. Ullah and his siblings lived with a foster family a block down from Tanweer. Ullah and Tanweer became close friends: they boxed and played football and cricket all the time. Ullah instigated fights and Tanweer came in and finished them off for him.<sup>9</sup>

Apparently, the club was not enough to tame the local drug problem. Sidique allegedly formed a fluid group of 15 to 20 members, "Mullah boys," who kidnapped young Pakistani drug addicts and, with the consent of their families, held them in a flat near the Salafi mosque, and forcibly cleansed them of their drug habits.<sup>10</sup> Shakil started to practice Islam seriously around that time.<sup>11</sup>

In 1997, at university, Sidique started dating his future wife, Hasina Patel, a Muslim of Indian origin, who was studying sociology.<sup>12</sup> They rebelled against their respective families' opposition to their possible marriage because of *biradari*—the suffocating system of honor, constraints, and mutual obligations imported from Kashmir that encouraged intermarriage among first cousins to preserve family property.<sup>13</sup>

In September, Shakil moved to Luton to study software engineering at the University of Bedfordshire. The move became a family affair. His parents, wife, and child moved there with him. There, his piety deepened and he prayed regularly at local mosques, where he met Mohammed Qayum Khan. Shakil and his relatives stayed for two years before returning to Leeds, where his second child was born. After his return, he became closer

to Saleem: they prayed and trained together. Saleem had become more religious under the influence of a friend. Before, in college, Saleem had been drinking, smoking, and clubbing. Afterward, he grew a beard and went to mosques, where he now hung out with young pious teenagers, like Tanweer, who were serious about Islam.<sup>14</sup>

### Acquisition of a Political Social Identity

On 26 November 1999, Shakil went to Mirpur to visit his relatives. He flew there with a local friend, who had already done some basic training at a Kashmiri camp and wanted to proceed to a more advanced level. They separated upon arrival as Shakil went to visit his family in Mirpur. While there, he decided to visit a training camp for three days. The camp organizers, aware of his disability and eventual return to England, were very accommodating. On the first day, he attended lectures on Islam, the history and politics of Kashmir, and the prohibition about attacking civilians. On the second day, he was allowed to fire guns as much as he wanted to "let off some steam" and see if he wanted to go further in his training. Shakil returned to Britain on 15 February 2000—a few months later, the police came to inquire about his trip because one of his local friends had gone missing and never returned to Britain.<sup>15</sup> Shakil resumed his studies in information technology by transferring to Huddersfield University.

When he returned to Leeds, Shakil reconnected with Sidique, who had got his business degree certificate the previous year. Sidique had also become more religious, although he still drank and smoked cannabis. He was also more politically conscious, paying attention to issues that affected the Muslim world and was now supportive of jihad in "illegally occupied Muslim land." He also inclined toward Salafi Islam rather than the Barelvi variant of his parents, which caused tension at home. He had come to reject the Hardy Street mosque because its imams rarely interacted with second-generation Muslims: the only time they did was when they taught their students the Quran and how to recite it—in Arabic. Salafis wrote in English and Sidique and some of his friends espoused their interpretation of Islam.<sup>16</sup>

In 2000, Tafazal Mohammed, the manager of the Hardy Street youth center, opened up the Iqra bookstore to meet the growing popular demand for a *dawah* (preaching of Islam) center. Naveed Fiaz was its first manager and Faisal Akhtar Khan set up its bank account. The bookstore became a



magnet for many young pious Muslims like Saleem, Sidique, and Shakil, who volunteered there. At the end of 2000, Saleem was hit by a bus, leaving him unconscious with a fractured skull. He was hospitalized for two days, but suffered with various mental deficits for the rest of his life, including loss of taste, mental blackouts, poor memory, constant tardiness, a sense of vulnerability, and loss of confidence. Shortly thereafter, Saleem was on a bus with Ullah, whom he recognized from the neighborhood. Ullah had dropped out of two colleges and was drifting without a regular job. Saleem sat down next to him, preached Islam to him for about five minutes, and invited him to visit the Iqra bookstore.<sup>17</sup>

About three weeks later, Ullah saw that there was a long wait at his barbershop and noticed the Iqra bookstore across the street. When he popped in, Saleem welcomed him and talked to him about massacres and atrocities committed against Muslims around the world. Until that time, Ullah had not been interested in politics, but he bought a book about ethnic cleansing against Muslims in Bosnia. Saleem also mentioned videos about massacres of Muslims in Chechnya and loaned him one. Ullah took it to his best friend Tanweer's home, where they watched it. At that time, Tanweer was managing Ullah's financial situation because Ullah had always been impulsive with his expenses. Ullah later said that watching the videos was inspirational: seeing Muslims from all over the world come and defend their fellow Muslims brought him "a sense of brotherhood to a different level. . . . I thought this is beautiful." It changed him. He went to pray with Tanweer at the local mosque. They stopped listening to music and started listening to audiocassettes of *nasheed* (war songs without instrumental music) and speeches by preachers like Maulana Masood Azhar, which Saleem translated for Tanweer. Ullah got rid of his ganja plants, took down his posters of boxers and Brazilian footballers, and replaced them with posters of Arabic verses, AK-47s, and Kashmir on his wall. He now wanted to help any Muslim brother in Kashmir or Afghanistan and help liberate Muslim lands.<sup>18</sup>

The Iqra bookstore became the hub of a network of local Muslim activists. They trained together at the gym and organized weekend outbound paramilitary camps in Wales and the Lake District. Ullah went to one with Tanweer in the Lake District and one in Wales with Sidique and Tafazal, which came under surveillance by the West Yorkshire Police on 26–28 January 2001.<sup>19</sup> British counterterrorism authorities were monitoring two Islamist radicals, Martin McDaid, "Abdullah," and James Alexander

McClintock, in Operation Warlock, started around 1998. McDaid was allegedly a former Special Forces veteran and described as "middle-aged, shaven hair, beard in an Islamic style, a healthy-looking man, aggressive, very outspoken and an aggressive proselytizer. He was very, very keen to convert people to the faith of Islam." He was suspected of being an Islamic extremist and of possible involvement in jihad training. He was a frequent visitor to the Hardy Street basement gym. He and McClintock had organized this specific outing for about 45 people. This was one of several such outings.<sup>20</sup> McClintock left Britain in 2001.

In March 2001, Sidique started a job as a mentor at a primary school at Hillside with an annual salary of £17,000.<sup>21</sup> In July, he and Saleem were two of four friends who planned to attend a training camp in Kashmir for two months. Ullah learned about it and asked Sidique to take him along. As the departure approached, Saleem got "cold feet," felt "homesick," and dropped out. Sidique got very upset with his friend, but Ullah replaced him. To raise money for the trip, Ullah worked for five weeks as a packer and got £700 from his older sisters. On 29 July 2001, they flew to Islamabad, where Sidique had arranged for Harkat ul-Mujahedin members to pick them up and take them for a two-week beginner's course at a camp in Manshera. They were separated from local trainees and put in a brick house, with shower and toilet, while the locals slept in small tents. They ran in the morning and learned how to handle and fire small caliber weapons. After two weeks, they asked to see Afghanistan. A Harkat ul-Mujahedin guide took them by taxi to Jalalabad, where Ullah fell sick and got diarrhea. They continued to Kabul and Bagram, the front line with the Northern Alliance. They stayed there for a week to 10 days. Ullah's health did not improve and he stayed back while Sidique visited the front line. When they returned to Beeston on 4 September 2001, they felt they had "accomplished something."<sup>22</sup>

### The Effects of the 9/11 Attacks

The Beeston boys reacted with puzzlement to the 9/11 attacks. An unreliable witness later claimed that the next day, at a computer shop in Beeston, Martin McDaid, Naveed Fiaz, and Tafazal Mohammed celebrated, but his claim was largely discredited at the Coroner's Inquests.<sup>23</sup> Ullah later testified that he saw the attacks on television and first thought it was an accident: "After a couple of days of the attack . . . people in the [Iqra] bookshop,



even myself, would believe that it was a Jewish conspiracy against Muslims." They printed a leaflet, *One Minute Silence*, explaining how Jews did it. "We all, even Sidique at that time, we all used to think . . . you can't do what they did in 9/11 because it's attacking innocent people, and the use of suicide operation is strictly forbidden in Islam."<sup>24</sup> Shakil said at his trial that he was also shocked by the attacks and denied that Muslims could have carried them out. "Before, we were seen as good . . . working class citizens, and now we were more or less . . . in the firing line . . . of people making allegations against Muslims being terrorists and extremists."<sup>25</sup> However, within a few months, they accepted that the attacks had indeed been carried out by al Qaeda and Sidique, at least, approved of them.<sup>26</sup>

The retaliatory U.S. invasion and bombing of Afghanistan affected the Beeston activists. To them, the bombing was "indiscriminate . . . and entire villages were obliterated," Shakil later recalled, "and lots and lots of innocent lives were lost."<sup>27</sup> They opposed these bombings and protested the war at their respective universities. Ullah also later said, "Life is very sacred and what the brothers did in 9/11 is wrong, but what the Americans did also is equally as wrong. You cannot justify one thing and then, you know, do the same."<sup>28</sup> Shakil condoned British Muslims who had gone to Afghanistan to defend their co-religionists: "if they want to go, they can go, it's up to them. It's none of my business."<sup>29</sup>

After 9/11, the Beeston boys became more defensive and aggressive about being Muslim, probably in reaction to the suspicions put on them. Mark Hargreaves, an outdoor instructor (climbing, mountaineering, caving, and camping), whom Tafazal had hired for the youth center, remembered being a target of proselytism. McDaid and the club's organizers distributed material and showed him pictures from the Iqra bookstore to probe his feelings.

A lot of it was about Israel and anti-Semitic, showing you horrific images of young people being murdered or bodies, carcasses, and it was designed to inflame and aggravate, and they were showing me this and saying, you know, "Do you think this is a bad thing?" "Of course, I do," I agreed, but then the premise was that I should . . . become involved with their belief systems. . . . Every opportunity to bring Islam into a conversation would be manipulated, anything at all. We . . . sat in a cave . . . it was very cold and dark, and he [Sidique] used that as an opportunity to explain to me how the light

of Islam could come into my life, and it was constant, it was just a constant barrage of these kinds of things. After a while, it became quite tiring.

Nevertheless, Hargreaves remembered Sidique as reasonable compared to McDaid, who said, "It was okay to blow people up because Allah said so."<sup>30</sup> Hargreaves left this job by summertime 2002, partly out of disagreement with their views.

The proselytism at the Hardy Street basement gym alarmed and angered the elders of the KMWA because it was based on a Salafi interpretation of Islam rather than their Bareilvi Kashmiri traditions. In early, 2002, they asked Tafazal to move his organization out of their premises. He eventually moved to Tempest Road, where he established a gym with fighting mats and punching bags for martial arts training, and called it the Hamara Healthy Living Center.<sup>31</sup>

Sidique had acquired a good reputation and became well respected both at the Hillside Primary School and at Hardy Street. All the young people looked up to him. After 9/11, he became more religious and concerned with the plight of Muslims worldwide. A female fellow teacher later remembered that he used to give her a lift home but stopped doing so afterward.<sup>32</sup> On 22 October 2001, he married Hasina Patel in a religious ceremony despite their respective families' opposition. He and his bride moved to nearby Batley. They delayed their honeymoon and took it in the first week of April 2002 in Turkey, where they did some scuba diving.<sup>33</sup>

### The Iqra Bookstore

Around that time, Sidique tried to persuade one of his primary school pupils, an 11- or 12-year-old, to convert to Islam. On one occasion, he took his student to the Iqra bookstore and told others that people would pay for what they've done to "Pakistan [*sic*]." He started to keep the accounts of the bookstore from February 2002, kept minutes of its board meeting from about April 2002, and prepared official documentation relating to its management. Iqra was a subscription bookstore and Sidique and others made regular monthly payments to it from mid-2002.<sup>34</sup>

The social life of the young militants in Beeston centered on the mosques, youth club, gym, and bookshop. The one-room club and gym focused on children from 13 to 19 years of age who had fallen behind or



been excluded from school. It also functioned as a general social meeting site where classes, lectures, and discussions took place. The group was not associated with any of the local mosques, and members attended them all. The official parliamentary investigation concluded,

Information about what went on in these places is mixed and incomplete. Much is hearsay. Accounts from those with more direct knowledge are conflicting. It is difficult to be sure what the facts are. Some have said the clubs, gym and bookshop were well known locally as centers of extremism. For example, that one of the gyms was known as "the al Qaida gym" because of who frequented it, and that the local bookshop was used to watch extremist DVDs and videos, access extremist websites, and for extremist lectures. Others present a very different picture. There is little evidence so far that [Sidique] Khan, Tanweer or Hussain were big internet users at home. Some who attended talks by Khan say that he focused on clean living, staying away from crime and drugs and the value of sports and outdoor activity. Others heard rumors that he held extreme views and some felt that Khan could preach aggressively.<sup>35</sup>

Martin Gilbertson, a computer technician, started working part time at the Iqra bookstore around June 2002. He later asserted that Tafazal, Fiaz, and McDaid were running the place. When he got there, the place was not yet fully opened, with very few books. It was still run down and being renovated to store the books. Gilbertson installed computers there and converted videos for the group. He remembered two that were related to "war zones around the world, in which [Muslim] children had been swept up and injured or killed, distressing, unpleasant photographs and documents of that time." He had agreed to do them because they highlighted the war and he was part of the Stop the War movement. However, he was distressed that they were anti-Semitic and anti-American. He recalled that the atmosphere at the bookstore was very hostile toward the West. McDaid was trying to convert him to Islam and was ranting and raving against the West. McDaid approved of the suicide bombing tactics of the Palestinians against Israel and the West. Fiaz complained, "This is what they're really doing to us. . . . They're murdering us left, right and center."<sup>36</sup>

Ullah used to hang around Iqra with Sidique, Shakil, and Tanweer but he was away for most of 2002 in Bangladesh, where his eldest sister forced

him to marry a local woman. Shakil went to the shop as a customer and not a volunteer for he was away at Huddersfield University at the time. In the two years he worked at Iqra, from June 2002 and July 2004, Gilbertson never saw Sidique there but occasionally saw Tanweer, with whom he had pleasant conversations.<sup>37</sup>

Tafazal, Fiaz, and others adopted a constitution for Iqra in June 2002, which declared its purpose to be "the advancement of the Islamic faith, through lectures, study groups, literature or by such other charitable means as the trustees may from time to time determine."<sup>38</sup> On 19 January 2003, Tafazal, Fiaz, Sidique, Saleem, Ullah, and Khalid Khaliq applied for the shop to be registered as a charity; the application was accepted on 14 February 2003. A May 2003 list of its board of trustees added Tanweer to the list.<sup>39</sup> Despite his constant presence there, McDaid was not on its board. Iqra sold Islamic books, tapes, CDs, DVDs, perfume, and other paraphernalia, was a lending library of Islamic books and videos, and was also used for IT lessons, lectures, and discussions on Islam. The Charity Commission investigation later reported that although a majority of the material there was appropriate, about a fifth of it "was considered to be political, biased, propagandist or otherwise inappropriate for a charity advancing the Islamic faith."<sup>40</sup>

In January 2003, Iqra added Arabic and Hadith interpretations to its offering and got a teacher, who brought along one of his star students, Jermaine Lindsay.<sup>41</sup> Lindsay was born in Jamaica in 1985. His mother split up from his father when he was five months old and she moved with her son to live with another man in Huddersfield, England. That relationship ended when Lindsay was five and his mother started another relationship. He was close to this second man and had two younger stepsisters. Lindsay was a bright, artistic, and musical child, good in school and at sports. He regularly worked out, and practiced martial arts and kickboxing. In 2000, his mother's relationship with his stepfather ended and she converted to Islam. Her son followed suit and took the name Jamal. At school, he started associating with troublemakers and was once disciplined for handing out leaflets in support of al Qaeda. At his local mosque and in Islamic groups around Huddersfield and Dewsbury, he was admired for the speed with which he learned Arabic and memorized long passages of the Quran, showing unusual maturity and seriousness. He began wearing traditional Muslim white robes.<sup>42</sup>

After 9/11, Lindsay expressed strong support for the Taliban and al Qaeda, held anti-American views, and browsed extremist websites on computers in the school library. He avoided former friends and neglected his



studies. At one point, he and his mother went to listen to Abdullah el Faisal. In 2002, his mother moved to the United States with another man whom she met online, leaving her son behind. This may have been traumatic for him: he left school despite a respectable number of GCSEs and went on welfare. He continued his online activity and protested the run-up to the war in Iraq. He told a friend that he wished to perform jihad before he died, fight against Americans in Iraq, or join the British Army so that he could kill his fellow soldiers.<sup>43</sup>

Lindsay met Samantha Lewthwaite from Aylesbury online. She was two years older than him and had also converted to Islam around 2000 after her parents had separated. She was studying religion and politics at the London School for Oriental and African Studies and was militantly against the upcoming war in Iraq. They exchanged e-mails, progressed to speaking on the phone, exchanged photographs, and finally met at a "Stop the War" march at Hyde Park, probably during the gigantic rally of 400,000 people on 28 September 2002.<sup>44</sup> They got married at a religious ceremony on 30 October 2002 despite her family's and friends' opposition. She took the name of Asmantara and moved into his Huddersfield home.<sup>45</sup>

#### Sidique Joins an al Qaeda Support Network

Sidique Khan and his wife went for Hajj from 26 January to 19 February 2003. After his return, he got into a dispute with Tafazal and Fiaz at Iqra over the sale of a cassette by an Islamic scholar, who was condemning suicide bombings and terrorism. Sidique wanted Iqra to stop selling his cassettes as he now approved of terrorist bombings like the recent Bali bombings. The Iqra management decided otherwise and Sidique left, never to return, and stopped his monthly contribution to Iqra.<sup>46</sup>

Ullah, Shakil, Tanweer, and he hoped to go and fight in Afghanistan. They prepared for their trip by doing physical training, jujitsu, and Thai boxing at the gym, and going on long walks over rough terrain. Sidique also raised money for the Afghan cause<sup>47</sup> and gave a three-minute lift in his car to McDaid on 14 April.<sup>48</sup> Sidique helped run the gym and, with Tafazal and Fiaz, organized monthly weekend outings in March, April, and May 2003.<sup>49</sup> Shakil walked five miles during the March outing and aggravated his condition, forcing him to stop coming to these treks. Ullah and Tanweer went on the April one in the Lake District. Tanweer changed from being a highly motivated student to becoming more religious, praying five times a day, and attending mosque regularly. He distanced himself from his secular

girlfriend. In June 2003, he dropped out of Leeds Metropolitan University to work part-time for his father at their fish-and-chips shop.<sup>50</sup>

Meanwhile, newly married Lindsay sold cell phone accessories. He had not yet connected with this militant group.<sup>51</sup> Saleem got married on 1 February 2003 to a pretty but very assertive woman of Bengali origin, who occasionally came to Iqra. They moved nearby in Beeston, but Saleem had two jobs besides spending time with his wife and drifted away from his friends at Iqra.<sup>52</sup>

On 11 March 2003, Sidique received a call from Mohammed Qayum Khan on his cell phone, which listed Iqra's address as his own.<sup>53</sup> Operation Crevice had just started and this was one of the first calls authorities picked up while monitoring Qayum. It is unclear how they got in contact and whether this was their first call. Shakil had met Qayum four years before during his stay in Luton<sup>54</sup> and may have introduced the two. Sidique and Qayum were both involved in fund-raising for Afghanistan and may have run into each other during their activities. In any case, Qayum needed a replacement for Khyam, who wanted to stay in Pakistan. Then there was a gap of four months until the Crevice monitoring team picked up their next call in July 2003.

In late spring, Shakil was finishing his university degree when his grandfather in Kashmir died. He wanted to go pay his respect and visit his grave during the summer, so Sidique volunteered to accompany him and help him with his luggage. Sidique wanted to deliver money he had collected for the Afghan cause and perhaps fight there. He had heard that the Afghan resistance was not accepting volunteers and he wanted to see for himself whether this was true. They planned to spend about two weeks with Sidique's family in Rawalpindi and find out about Afghanistan, and two weeks with Shakil's family in Kashmir.<sup>55</sup>

The Crevice monitoring group picked up several phone calls between Qayum and Sidique on 13, 19, and 24 July but observed no personal meetings.<sup>56</sup> On 24 July 2003, Shakil and Sidique flew from Heathrow to Islamabad. Sidique paid £1,130 for the tickets; Shakil reimbursed him for his share. They were scheduled to return home on 20 August.<sup>57</sup>

#### Linking with Khyam and the Gorque Camp

Chance had it that Shakil and Sidique flew in on the same plane as Omar Khyam's friends coming to participate in the Gorque camp, as described in the previous chapter. On the morning of 25 July, Khyam and Mohammed



Babar came to the airport to pick up their friends while Salahuddin Amin came to pick up Sidique and Shakil. The three hosts had come early, saw each other, and went up to the restaurant to have breakfast. Babar later testified that Amin said that he was waiting for two men sent over by Qayum "because these two guys . . . were hearing conflicting reports on whether or not . . . guys from other countries were allowed to come in. So . . . they wanted to come for themselves and find out what the situation was."<sup>58</sup> Babar later spotted two young Western-dressed strangers who had just cleared customs. He asked whether they were looking for "Khalid," and, when they nodded yes, he introduced them to Amin.<sup>59</sup>

Sidique and Shakil met up with Amin and Sidique gave him the money. When Sidique asked about Afghanistan, Amin pointed to Khyam: "That's your man. He knows more about Afghanistan than anybody else." Sidique did not have time to talk because his uncle had come to take them home. Instead, he and Khyam agreed to meet later at an apartment rented by Amin in Islamabad. A few hours later, Amin brought them to the apartment. On the way there, Amin advised them to take aliases for security reasons. Sidique became Ibrahim and Shakil Zubair.<sup>60</sup>

Babar, Ali Khan, Khyam, Amin, Sidique, and Shakil discussed the situation in Afghanistan. The boys from Beeston said that "they wanted to come and fight in Afghanistan against the Americans and NATO and anybody aligned with them," Babar later recounted.<sup>61</sup> Khyam confirmed that Afghanistan was closed to foreigners at this time but added that he and Babar had organized a training camp at Gorque. Shakil later remembered, "They were trying to say it is training, weapons training, and I said, 'I've already done that anyway in Kashmir, I don't really need to do none of that.'" So Sidique and Shakil at first declined, but, Shakil later recalled, "Sid was a very much outward type of person and . . . he'd want to spend more time and to get to know a bit more about what's going on in Afghanistan." Khyam insisted and said, "it was going to be all English lads at the camp." This was significant for Shakil. "The last thing I wanted is a camp where there would be lots of Arab geezers . . . hanging around in a camp that's established . . . proper al Qaeda type of militant run camp, and I wasn't really interested with it. I was really scared about it. Well, he put it out as if they were just lads from back home and out here to train." Khyam said it would be only for a couple of days and Shakil finally relented: "We thought it would be a good laugh, yeah, we'd go ahead. It was only a couple of days." Khyam told them he would contact them and they all left for their respective places.<sup>62</sup>

Sidique and Shakil met with their fellow trainees the evening of 29 July at a luxury hotel in Islamabad. I have already described their journey to Gorque in the last chapter. On the way up, Shakil experienced difficulties with the climb and his companions and a local shepherd took turns helping him. During the climb, Sidique got to know Khyam.<sup>63</sup>

The "trainees" rested the next day after the climb and on the morning of their third and last day, on 3 August, all the participants were allowed to shoot small-caliber weapons. While Sidique and Shakil were doing this, the head trainer detonated a bomb for a few other trainees in another part of the camp. It is unclear whether Shakil or Sidique were aware of this experiment. During that time, they fired two magazines from an AK-47 and short bursts from a light machine gun. Shakil was chosen to fire a RPG because of his infirmity. The total amount of time that Shakil or Sidique had an AK-47 in their hands and held the light machine gun, and Shakil fired the RPG was 10 to 15 minutes.<sup>64</sup> After the firing, they all left the camp. Shakil had a lot of difficulties coming down: "Because of my contracture in my left leg . . . if I'm coming down, I'm putting the entire weight of my body on it, I kept falling because the leg would not hold my weight, and so I had to be carried down."<sup>65</sup> He also had diarrhea and an ear infection.

The whole group spent the night at the maulana's house in Gorque. They left the next morning for Peshawar and traveled onward to Lahore, where Sidique and Shakil spent the night at Babar's flat. Sidique was very concerned about Shakil's health. "My legs had swollen by now, I'd overworked my body completely," Shakil remembered. "I had got a bad ear by then. I was very ill." Sidique insisted that they should fly back immediately. Shakil protested that he wanted to visit with his family in Kashmir, but finally relented. Babar helped Sidique change their tickets for 7 August. They hired a cab to retrieve their luggage from Rawalpindi and returned in time for their early morning flight from Lahore. After their return, Sidique e-mailed Babar, who did not bother to respond.<sup>66</sup> On 15 August, Sidique called Qayum.<sup>67</sup>

As mentioned in the previous chapter, this "camp" was not an al Qaeda camp, contrary to the mythology that arose about this so-called Malakand camp.<sup>68</sup>

### Part of the Crevice Network

Ullah later testified that when Sidique came back from his trip, "he was happy that we've sorted out good contacts to get to Pakistan and eventually



to Afghanistan." As argued in the previous chapter, the camp cemented the participants' social identity as soldiers and established the friendship between Sidique and Khyam. After their return, Sidique kept in touch with their fellow trainees and Ullah remembered that the first two times they went to meet with them, Khyam was still in Pakistan—he came back on 31 August 2003. Shakil's father gave him money at the end of September for graduating from university and he bought a car with it. He drove Sidique, Ullah, and Tanweer to Crawley at the end of September to visit Khyam and his friends for a long meal. After the visit, Khyam called Shakil on 28 September to talk to Sidique.<sup>69</sup>

Shortly after, Shakil watched *Saving Private Ryan* with Sidique at the latter's home. A week later, Sidique accused Shakil of having stolen some money from his home. Shakil protested and this led to a serious argument. Shakil later believed that Sidique thought "Shakil, it must have been you who did this because obviously you've taken back your ticket money because you're blaming me for not being able to go to your grandfather." Sidique further reproached Shakil for drinking, smoking, and socializing with non-Muslims, and accused him of being a Kashmiri nationalist. Their relationship never recovered.<sup>70</sup> From then on, Shakil parted way with Sidique and also lost contact with their friends from Crawley as they were closer to Sidique than him—Sidique was in regular phone contact with Khyam starting in October 2003.<sup>71</sup> Shakil occasionally saw Ullah and Saleem at the mosque. In December, he started a job as an administrator trainee in a computer business in Rothwell.

In September 2003, Lindsay and his wife moved to Aylesbury near Luton for her to be closer to her mother, with whom she had reconciled. He returned on Christmas to Huddersfield to see his Christian sister and visited his Beeston friends at the same time. He took a plumbing apprenticeship around London before finding a job as a carpet fitter.<sup>72</sup>

In late 2003, the gym and club moved and became the Iqra Youth Centre and Gym, not to be confused with the Iqra bookshop. Sidique remained active at the gym but kept away from the bookshop. In fact, his, Tanweer's, and Ullah's names were dropped from Iqra bookshop's board of trustees.<sup>73</sup> They hung out together at the gym and planned on going together to fight in Afghanistan.

Operation Crevice expanded its surveillance on Khyam at the end of January 2004 and caught Sidique calling Khyam on 28 January. On 2 February, Sidique, Tanweer, and Ullah drove to Crawley in a car registered to

Hasina Patel to meet with Khyam and his younger brother. Their respective cars were observed parked next to each other at 8:28 PM. Khyam got into Sidique's car while Ullah and Tanweer joined Shujah in the other. Khyam and Sidique drove for about 25 minutes up and down a highway and returned at 9:10 PM. All the people got out of their cars, hugged each other, got back in their respective cars and went home. The Beeston boys, with discreet surveillance behind them, stopped at a McDonald's on their way back. The surveillance team secretly photographed them there and labeled them Unidentified Males C, D, and E (UDM C, D, and E) later identified as Ullah, Tanweer, and Sidique respectively. The surveillance team saw Sidique drop off his passengers in Beeston and park in his own driveway.

Shortly after this meeting, the Security Service reevaluated Operation Crevice and upgraded Khyam and his associates from an al Qaeda support cell to a suspected terrorist cell that might conduct an attack in Britain. On 11 February, the executive liaison group was formed as a result of this rise in threat level. The investigation centered around Khyam, Qayum, and a Luton associate with a view to arresting and prosecuting them and disrupting the plot.<sup>74</sup>

### The Party on Behalf of Khawaja

By mid-February, the three Beeston boys had decided to follow Khyam to Pakistan.<sup>75</sup> On 21 February, they came to Crawley for the party at Gulzar's house for visiting Momin Khawaja. At 8:49 PM, Khyam, his younger brother, and the Beeston boys got into Khyam's car and drove to a kebab shop, where they bought some food. At 9:10 PM, the car was back at Gulzar's house, but the passengers remained in the car in deep discussion until 9:34 PM, when they rejoined the party. Apparently, the surveillance team had missed the three Beeston boys in the car. They believed that only Khyam and Shujah had gone to get the food. However, the car was wired and the listening device in the car showed that there were five individuals, whose conversation went as follows.<sup>76</sup>

On the way to the kebab shop, they talked about their upcoming trip to Pakistan and Sidique told Khyam, "I know that it's really out of order, but I was hoping for a flat extension. . . . My wife's having a kid." On the way back, Ullah or Tanweer asked Khyam, "Are you really a terrorist?" Khyam answered, "They're working with us." The first man insisted, "You're serious." Khyam interrupted, "No, I'm not a terrorist, but they are



working through us." The Beeston lad continued, "There's no one higher than you." Khyam redirected the conversation to the importance of security, especially when traveling to and from Pakistan as the authorities were watching. "Right now, I'm still Emir of the brothers. . . . They are saying that they can come, like one way . . . that's it. If you agree with that yeah it's not a problem."<sup>77</sup>

Since it was a one-way ticket, Khyam suggested, "you may as well rip the country apart economically as well. All the brothers are running scams. . . . I advise you to do the same . . . and you will probably walk away with twenty grand. Yeah that's really good money bruv. I can set it all up for you, you can actually go. I will get a brother to run it and I think it is a very good scheme, yeah. All the brothers that [are] leaving are doing it." Sidique asked again for the postponement of his departure. His child was due in late May, and with three weeks added to make sure that his wife and baby were fine, this postponed his departure to mid-June. Khyam agreed. Sidique then asked what he needed to buy. Khyam listed the necessary gear from the top of his head: "a 45-liter rucksack; a compact sleeping bag; special boots; and a waterproof and breathable jacket—there is no need for a Gortex one." He added that Sidique would need about £20,000 but should not take more than £2,000 through customs.<sup>78</sup>

As for saying good-bye to friends, Khyam advised them that he rarely met any now for their own good. He no longer lived in Crawley. When he was to leave, he would tell them. "Of course you love them bruv, you love them for the Deen. It's because we love the Deen this much that we stay away from them 'cause I know it's better for me and it's better for them."<sup>79</sup> Sidique told Khyam that he had found another brother "who's just coming in, from all the tests that we've done our general consensus of opinion is that he is not ready for . . . (unclear) He's about 18." Khyam suggested that perhaps they could invite him over the summer in Pakistan. Khyam stressed that Sidique should give his complete obedience to his emir when he joined al Qaeda. A house had already been set up for them. In terms of timing, Khyam said that he and his companions would be gone within the next three to four weeks, before the end of March, which gave them time to pull off a few frauds. Khyam explained his scam of buying merchandise on credit, selling it at half-price to his uncle, and never paying back the credit. He said he could help them with the credit application and selling to his uncle. He also advised them to max out on their credit cards, and even apply for new ones and max out on them

as well.<sup>80</sup> After their 40 minutes' absence, the conspirators rejoined the party.

### Involvement in Fraud

The Beeston boys took Khyam up on his offer to help set them up in various fraudulent schemes. On 28 February, Sidique drove Tanweer and Ullah to Crawley, where they had breakfast with Khyam and his brother at a McDonald's. They all went to Marshall's Builders Merchants and Jewsons. Tanweer tried to open three accounts at Howdens, but they told him he could only open one. They prayed at a mosque in Slough and then went to Khyam's apartment in the afternoon. They had dinner and went to a cell phone shop owned by a radical imam, where they stayed two hours. They went for another meal, dropped off Khyam at home, and returned to Leeds around midnight. The surveillance squad recognized UDM C, D, and E and followed the car to Beeston and Sidique's home, around 3 AM.<sup>81</sup>

Three weeks later, on 20 March, Sidique arrived at Khyam's apartment in Crawley around 11:20 PM in a rented car, as his car was being serviced. Khyam and his brother got into the car, which Sidique drove around for half an hour, and they then returned to Khyam's apartment around 10 minutes before 1 AM. Sidique and Khyam engaged in a further 10-minute conversation before Sidique returned home.<sup>82</sup> On 22 March, Sidique called Khyam on his cell phone. On the morning of 23 March, Sidique, Ullah, and Tanweer returned to Crawley in the same rented car and met Khyam and Shujah. Surveillance again recognized them as UDM C, D, and E from Leeds. They visited with Nadeem Ashraf and picked up Azhar Khan. The six traveled in a two-car convoy to Ilford in midafternoon: Khyam, Azhar, and Tanweer in Khyam's car and Sidique, Ullah, and Shujah in Sidique's rented car. The conversation in Khyam's car was recorded, and a contemporary Security Service summary stated, "large parts of their discussion are unclear, but they did mention the importance of being physically and mentally prepared for travelling to Pakistan."<sup>83</sup> However, when the conversation was later transcribed, it was found that they had discussed the Madrid bombings. One unidentified speaker (UM) said, "if there was an attack the size of Madrid in the UK, we would not be able to handle it, that would destroy everything. . . . Another UM says look on the success of the Madrid bombing, change of power."<sup>84</sup>



In Ilford, the six militants visited a designer store, a cash-and-carry store, and a bookshop twice, lingering for approximately one hour during their second visit. They returned to Slough around 9 PM, and Khyam and Sidique went alone to a local Internet café.<sup>85</sup> The intelligence summary indicated that Khyam was moving to Pakistan permanently: "The group received detailed advice from a fraud expert about raising money fraudulently, selling cars bought on credit, lying about wages in loan applications, skimming credit cards, and obtaining and defaulting on bank loans. UDM E [Sidique] also mentioned that he worked in a school counselling children, and that he had to return his . . . hire car and pick up his repaired car from the garage."<sup>86</sup> The visitors returned home around midnight.<sup>87</sup>

On 24 March, Ullah opened an account at Howdens under the name of Ships Builders for £7,000 to buy large appliances, Sidique applied for an HSBC loan of £10,000 and drew the funds two days later, and Tanweer applied for credit at a car credit company and Barclay's Bank. On 30 March 2004, Khyam and his fellow Crawley conspirators were arrested. The Beeston conspirators assumed that the police had detected them and expected to be arrested at any moment. They laid low and stopped their credit applications. On 4 April, Tanweer was arrested for a public order offense of a fairly minor kind and cautioned.<sup>88</sup> To throw the police off their scent, Sidique and Tanweer pretended to be "un-Islamic," by going to nonhalal restaurants and movies, and laughing out loud at jokes.<sup>89</sup> With the Crevice arrests, Sidique lost all his contacts with al Qaeda since Qayum had already dropped out in September 2003.

#### Hussain Joins the Beeston Boys

In mid-2004, several of the Leeds militants had children. In April, Lindsay had a son, Abdullah, and Sidique had a daughter, Maryam. In August, Saleem had a daughter and in September, Shakil had a son. In April 2004, after an extensive fund-raising campaign, the Hamara Centre on Tempest Road opened, offering a wide variety of activities, including arts and crafts; gym and outdoor sports activities; girls' only activities such as sewing and cooking; aerobics; and classes in information technology, cultural awareness, and self-defense. The center was very popular and acted as a conduit between politicians, police, and priests. Saleem was hired as its caretaker responsible for general maintenance and opening and closing it. Sidique, Ullah, and Tanweer came regularly to take karate classes. At one point,

Ullah accidentally broke Sidique's nose, which required a visit to the emergency room.<sup>90</sup> Saleem reconnected with his former friends, even though Sidique kept his distance from him.

Among the center's users was Hasib Hussain from nearby Holbeck. A big 18-year-old, born in Leeds to Pakistani immigrants, he was a quiet schoolboy, with few friends, although he had been briefly involved in some racial tension at school. His older brother was close to Sidique and played cricket with Tanweer. Hasib had first met Sidique at the Hardy Street base-ment around 2001, when he started attending the mosque above it. Shortly after the 9/11 attacks, he openly supported al Qaeda. He wrote, "You're next," to two students and "Al Qaida No Limits" in his religious education book, drawing a picture of planes crashing into the Twin Towers. He distributed leaflets at school to younger children in support of al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. In early 2002, he went with his family on hajj and then to Pakistan, where his older brother got married. After this, he began wearing traditional clothing and a prayer cap on Fridays. He regularly read religious texts and prayed late into the night. In 2003, he got seven GCSEs in English, literature, mathematics, science, design technology, and Urdu, but at C grade level and below. He later got a general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) certificate in business.<sup>91</sup>

As there was no mosque in the vicinity of his home, Hussain came to pray at the Hamara Centre. Sidique started giving him lifts to the gym in May, and soon they, Ullah, and Tanweer hung out together all the time. Sidique got closer to Tanweer. He used to pick up first Ullah then Tanweer on his rides to the gym, but by early summer 2004, he reversed his pattern and picked up Tanweer first. In July 2004, when Hussain's parents went abroad for a long period, Sidique and Tanweer frequently came over to his home and spent a lot of time talking and praying together into the early hours of the morning.<sup>92</sup>

The men from Beeston had not given up on their plan to go to a training camp and fight in Afghanistan. At the gym, they would talk about their upcoming trip. Hussain and Saleem heard about it. Saleem later testified that unlike in 2001 when he hesitated, he now felt ready to go. "I had a lot of issues with my wife at home and that time I know my marriage was very bad. . . . We were even contemplating separating and stuff like that. I wanted time to get away and when I heard MSK and all these boys talking about going abroad, this is like an opportunity for me to like go with 'em, I wanted to go . . . see the place for myself, see the people and . . . do the



training and whatever." He told his wife, "Listen . . . I need to go away to sort my head out."<sup>93</sup>

Because of the continuing grudge that Sidique held about Saleem for letting him down in 2001, Saleem asked Ullah to intercede for him. Ullah approached Sidique: "You know what, Sadeer [Saleem] wants to come along, yeah, and we should let him." Ullah later explained, "For me . . . if a Muslim wants to go and help his Muslim brother . . . it's my obligation to help him." Sidique replied, "You know what, brother, if you're going to take him, you ride with him, yeah, and on your head, be it. You take him, do whatever you want, I've no problem."<sup>94</sup> All five now resolved to go to Pakistan after Eid, which that year fell in mid-November.

In August, Sidique and his family got a two-bedroom council house on Lees Holm in Dewsbury but moved in later, in February 2005. In the meanwhile, the couple stayed with her parents. (Sidique probably anticipated going to Pakistan soon and she wanted to stay at her parents' house with their baby during his absence.) In September, Lindsay and his family came for a week and stayed at the empty house. His wife and Sidique's wife became friends. Lindsay hung around with Sidique and his friends, and came to a Saturday karate class at the Hamara Centre with them.<sup>95</sup>

Around August 2004, Sidique became upset at what Shakil was saying about him to mutual friends as they were bad-mouthing each other. Sidique called him and angrily told him to stop. On 23 August, after the late afternoon prayer, Sidique and Tanweer waited for Shakil as he came out of the mosque. Since the latter was not speaking to Sidique, Tanweer asked him to get into Sidique's car. Sidique drove toward Dewsbury, angry and silent, while Tanweer asked Shakil about his swearing at Sidique and calling him a liar. Sidique pulled over, got out, and pulled Shakil out of the car. Sidique then attacked Shakil, using "martial arts moves on me, elbows, knees, punching on the floor, the rest of it." After Shakil was visibly beat up, Tanweer dragged Sidique back into the car, and they drove away, leaving Shakil on the ground with multiple injuries to the face, neck, and abdomen. A stranger saw him and drove him to a Dewsbury hospital, where he stayed overnight. The discharge diagnosis reported, "Extensive facial bruising and strangulation marks around neck. Also bruising on stomach and back, swollen face and cuts behind ears."<sup>96</sup> Shakil did not report the assault to the police. Two weeks later, his son was born. He invited Ullah, Tanweer, and Hussain to the celebration but not Sidique.

At the start of the school year in the fall, Sidique was frequently absent from his job and wrote a series of sick notes explaining that his father had

fallen ill. He resigned on 19 November 2004.<sup>97</sup> At the Hamara Centre, the karate classes stopped for Ramadan. Sidique bought a rucksack, thermal undergarments, walking boots, and other camping-type associated equipment in October. Hussain was arrested for shoplifting a hat and a pair of gloves, and was cautioned. On 26 October, Sidique recorded a short videotape at his home with his daughter, Tanweer, Hussain, and Ullah.<sup>98</sup>

The friends stayed at a mosque for the last ten days of Ramadan (3–12 November) praying and reading the Quran. On 10 November, Sidique got visas for Tanweer and himself, but not for Ullah or Saleem. When Ullah found out, he confronted Sidique, who made an excuse: "What's going to happen is me and Kaki are going to go out first, we're going to sort out the contacts and then we'll give you a call. Be ready to move out any time soon, yeah, and then just come over." As he later testified, Ullah was upset. "I was thinking we were supposed to get the visas together. . . . I said to myself I can get my own visas, so I went and got them [for him and Saleem] the day after." Hussain would come last on his own because his parents were so protective of him. If his parents did not accept his excuse of going to Pakistan for a two-week holiday, he should "do a runner" and his friends would pick him up in Islamabad.<sup>99</sup>

On the last day of Eid, 15 November, Sidique made a farewell video for his daughter, explaining to her that he was not going to come back, but he loved her. He held her in one hand, the video camera in the other, and filmed their reflection in a mirror.<sup>100</sup> "Sweetheart, I don't have too long to go now. . . . I'm gonna really, really miss you. . . . You've been the happiest thing in my life, you and your mom. . . . I wish I could have been part of your life, especially the next few months . . . with you learning to walk and things. . . . I have to do this thing for all our future and it will be the best, insh'Allah, in the long run . . . I'm doing what I'm doing for the sake of Islam." His wife filmed another clip of him holding his six-month-old daughter and telling her to remember him and look after her mother.<sup>101</sup> These were clearly good-bye videos, implying that Sidique did not expect to ever come back. He also made a will and left it behind. Tanweer told his family that he was going to Pakistan to look for a school to study Islam. His family paid for his trip and provided him with spending money.<sup>102</sup>

#### Sidique and Tanweer Meet al Qaeda

On 18 November 2004, Khan and Tanweer flew to Islamabad and stayed for a week with Tanweer's uncle in Faisalabad. Little was known about their



trip until May 2011 when an Austrian returning from Afghanistan named Maqsood Lodin was captured in Berlin. In his underwear, he carried a digital storage device with a report on the three British bombing plots.<sup>103</sup>

Its author was Rashid Rauf, born into a religious family in Mirpur, Pakistan. His family and he immigrated to Birmingham around 1982 when he was one. His father opened a South Asian bakery that became successful. Rashid as the oldest son chipped in and helped deliver bread early in the mornings. Even though Rashid went to the mosque at 5 AM before his morning rounds, his interests were working out at the gym and playing soccer. Neighbors did not remember him as particularly religious or interested in Islam or politics.<sup>104</sup> The Rauf family kept close to its roots and relatives in Kashmir.

Rauf's best friend was Mohammed Gulzar<sup>105</sup> of the same age but born in Birmingham. They met as children and stayed close until they went to university around 1999. Rauf studied accounting at Portsmouth University while Gulzar studied computers at Kingston University in London before transferring to Portsmouth in 2000 and reuniting with his friend. During that year, Rauf's father established a charity, Crescent Relief, based in East London, dedicated to education and health, especially in Kashmir. His mother set up a small study center in the back of their house in Birmingham, where she taught Quran to about 20 girls three to four times a week.<sup>106</sup> While in Portsmouth, the two friends became involved with the Tablighi Jamaat. Gulzar dropped out of school to "do some business." During Ramadan, Gulzar went on a Tablighi Jamaat mission for a few days. It is unclear whether Rauf accompanied him.<sup>107</sup>

By February 2002, the two friends tried to support the mujahedin in Afghanistan. From an Internet café in Portsmouth, they ordered a GPS map receiver and various map CDs from a U.S. aviation company using a stolen credit card. They were both arrested but released and cautioned for deception offenses.<sup>108</sup> In April 2002, Rashid's 54-year-old maternal uncle Mohammed Saeed was stabbed repeatedly on his way home. He staggered to the steps of his house before collapsing and dying in front of his wife and children. The main suspects were the two friends, as the attack was allegedly an honor killing about an arranged marriage. Two weeks later, Rauf and Gulzar fled to Pakistan.<sup>109</sup>

Little is publicly known about their lives in Pakistan. They found refuge among Rauf's relatives and their friends in Pakistan, who were supporters of Kashmiri and militant Pakistani groups such as Harakat ul-Jihad Islami,

Harakat ul-Mujahidin, and Jaish e-Mohammed. Gulzar later testified that they hid with the Tablighi Jamaat<sup>110</sup> but they also may have gone for training at a Kashmiri military camp. In the confusion of the times, several Pakistani militant organizations were helping foreign militants fleeing Afghanistan after the U.S. invasion. The prominent members of these militant organizations formed an informal community and intermarried: surviving men married eligible young women and widows from this community. It included al Qaeda members such as Abu Faraj al-Libi, Hamza Rabia, and Abu Ubaydah al Masri; Kashmiri militants such as Harakat ul-Jihad Islami leaders Ilyas Kashmiri and Qari Imran and Harakat ul-Mujahidin leader Masood Azhar; and foreign facilitators such as Mohammed al Ghabra.<sup>111</sup> The two British fugitives were introduced to this community by relatives. Qari Imran arranged for Rauf to marry his wife's sister, Saira. A third sister is married to the younger brother of Jaish e-Mohammed founder Maulana Azhar. After their marriage in May 2003, Rauf and his wife moved to Bahawalpur and had two daughters.<sup>112</sup> It is not known how Rauf met Abu Ubaydah al-Masri, who was a veteran of the Afghan Soviet war and had resided in Germany before becoming the leader of al Qaeda's Kabul front against the allied invasion in 2001. Afterward, he became the al Qaeda emir in the Kunar Valley. Rauf's relationship with him became operational in the summer of 2004. Abu Ubaydah became one of al Qaeda's most ingenious hydrogen-peroxide-based bomb makers. He is referred to as "Haji" in Rauf's after-action report found on Lodin.<sup>113</sup>

In that document, Rauf reported that he got Tanweer's uncle's phone number from one of his contacts in Britain, Umar, whom he had previously trained and dispatched home to carry out an attack. However, when Umar had tried to recruit his friends for it, they had drifted back to drug abuse.<sup>114</sup> Rauf waited about a week before contacting the visitors to make sure they were not under surveillance. He met them in Faisalabad, about an hour's drive from Tanweer's family home. They drove back to the uncle's home: loud music was playing to hide the visitors' piety. Sidique whispered that Tanweer's family disapproved of their jihadi intentions and the family driver was not witting. After spending some time with them, Rauf found them to have sound knowledge of Islam. Sidique and Tanweer explained to him that they wanted to fight in Afghanistan. Rauf took them to an apartment in Islamabad, where they listened to tapes of Anwar al-Awlaki, Abu Hamza al-Masri, and Abdullah el-Faisal while Rauf was making arrangements. A few days later, he took them to meet Abu Ubaydah. According to



the after action report, the meeting had a "profound effect on the brothers. It took Haji just a few days to persuade the duo to conduct a suicide bombing in Britain."<sup>115</sup> On 25 November, Hasina Patel, Sidique's wife, wrote in her diary, "S rang, good news." The next day, she wrote again, "S rang, good news, back by Feb?" She did not tell anyone that her husband would come back, not even Ullah, Saleem, or Hussain. This was a dramatic change of plans, contrary to Sidique's video to his daughter.<sup>116</sup>

Many pundits describe the above process of connecting with al Qaeda as "al Qaeda recruited Sidique and Tanweer." This is misleading. From this account, it is clear that both volunteered to join al Qaeda: they were looking for the organization rather than the organization looking for them. They initiated and drove this process. However, they wanted to fight and die fighting in Afghanistan and what Abu Ubaydah did was to turn them around and send them back to Britain to carry out an attack there. The evidence is quite overwhelming, and indeed accepted by the Coroner's Inquests, that they no intention to attack Britain until the end of November, and no one except for Sidique and Tanweer was aware of this until they came back in February.<sup>117</sup>

#### The Alleged Casing Trip to London

Meanwhile in Britain, Ullah and Saleem started their fraudulent schemes to fund their trip. On 22 October, Saleem applied for large loans but was turned down. On 26 October, he opened a trade account at Howdens under the name Bads Builders and accrued a debt of £2,784 but cleared £540 from it. At the end of October, Ullah got credit for merchandise he bought at Jewsons and Howdens. He got appliances like refrigerators and cookers delivered to his sister's address, where Tanweer, shortly before he left for Pakistan, picked them up in his uncle's van and dropped them off to people who bought them. Ullah gave a cooker and washing machine to Sidique's wife. He stored some of the appliances at Sidique's empty house. He also maxed out on his credit card and, by 16 December, had accumulated about £3,900 for his trip.<sup>118</sup>

Ullah and Saleem did not receive any communication from their friends in Pakistan. Ullah grew impatient and visited Tanweer's family's fish and chip shop. Tanweer's brother told him that Tanweer had phoned from Pakistan and left a phone number in Faisalabad. Ullah decided to proceed according to plan. From his testimony, "After I've been waiting for about

three weeks, me and Sadeer . . . booked the tickets and the next time I see Nicky [Tanweer's brother] I'll tell him . . . and if the message gets across, it gets across. If it doesn't, I'll already go there." He told Tanweer's brother, "I'm going to Pakistan. The next time you speak to him, make sure your kid comes and picks me up.' I know Kaki would not leave us there stranded. In the worst-case scenario, if he did leave us stranded, we could always go to Sadeer's family's home in Kashmir. So, really for us, it's not really a problem." He decided to go to London to buy the tickets there and take the opportunity to visit his oldest sister, who was living there in a homeless shelter. He called Lindsay and told him he would come to London. Lindsay invited him and his friends to drop by his home.<sup>119</sup>

On 16 December 2004, Shakil, who had reconnected with his friends after Sidique's departure, volunteered to drive Ullah and Saleem to London. Hussain joined them. They drove to east London and bypassed Lindsay's home because Aylesbury was too far away. Ullah left to see his sister for the whole evening and rejoined his friends very late. They picked up Lindsay, who came down to London, and all of them stayed overnight at a hostel near King's Cross train station. The next morning, they visited the London Eye and the Aquarium. Ullah bought two round-trip airline tickets to Islamabad and paid about £2,000 for them.<sup>120</sup> (He had remembered Khyam's advice to buy round-trip tickets so as not to arouse suspicion.)

The Crown prosecutors later tried Saleem, Ullah, and Shakil for involvement in the London bombings, claiming that their trip was reconnaissance for the bombings. However, a jury rightly acquitted them of this charge. At the time, the defendants believed that Sidique and Tanweer had gone to Pakistan and Afghanistan permanently, with no plans of returning home. They had no idea that they would come back and carry out a terrorist operation at home.<sup>121</sup>

On Christmas, Lindsay came to visit his sister. During his visit, he met Ullah, Saleem, Hussain, and Shakil at Sidique's house and all five spent the night there. The next day, Shakil and Hussain drove Ullah and Saleem to Manchester airport for their flight to Islamabad.<sup>122</sup>

#### Al Qaeda Training in Pakistan

Tanweer and his uncle's driver picked them up at the airport and drove them to a small apartment in Faisalabad. Tanweer told them, "I've been



with the brothers, with Sidique, and we've just been training and everything." On 28–29 December, Tanweer got a call from his contact and the three friends went to Peshawar, where two individuals from the tribal areas warned them not to speak English and took them to a "little compound," Ullah recalled at trial, "where it was a house and it had big walls. . . . It was a little hut . . . like a little barn. . . . It was pretty big . . . say, the size of this court hall, and we just stayed in there. . . . We got there a bit late, about ten o'clock. . . . We prayed, ate and went to sleep, chatted with Kaki for a bit." Ullah was disappointed: "we had a set plan . . . that we wanted to be together and everything and everything changed. . . . Kaki explained to me. . . . Because you brothers have come late, you are going to have to do the training that we have already done, and then we can link up in about 4 or 5 weeks and we will be together."<sup>123</sup> In the morning, Sidique picked up Kaki and they left immediately to a site nearby.

Rauf had arranged for "Marwan Suri" to provide bomb-making training for Sidique and Tanweer, using an organic peroxide consisting of hydrogen peroxide mixed with piperine found in black pepper for the main charge and hexamethylene triperoxide diamine (HMTD) for the detonator. The specific design of these bombs was new in Britain. More traditionally, bombs were ammonium-nitrate-fertilizer-based devices as in Crevice. Indeed, later forensic analysis took a considerable time to identify the component of the London bombs.<sup>124</sup>

In its pure form, hydrogen peroxide is a colorless liquid, slightly more viscous and heavier than water, and comes in a water solution, usually at low concentration for safety. In 2005, the highest concentration available in Britain was around 18 percent, which meant that, to be used as an explosive mixture, the solution had to be concentrated to about 70 percent. This process takes advantage of the fact that water boils at 100 degrees centigrade while hydrogen peroxide boils at 150 degrees centigrade. In theory, heating a mixture of water and hydrogen peroxide would selectively evaporate the water first, leaving a highly concentrated solution of hydrogen peroxide. The reality is more complicated because hydrogen peroxide is unstable and breaks down to water and oxygen as it is heated. So the heating process has to be carried out gently at around 50–60 degrees centigrade. In theory, four liters of 18 percent hydrogen peroxide could be concentrated to a liter of 72 percent hydrogen peroxide. But this gentle heating would take hours, if not days, to accomplish. More rapid heating results in a breakdown of

hydrogen peroxide and is self-defeating. The measurement of its concentration in water takes advantage of its specific density, which is 1.29 at 70 percent concentration at 20 degrees centigrade. However, a small error in the measured volume or weight can dramatically throw off measurement.

Hydrogen peroxide must be mixed with an organic substance to create an organic peroxide, which is unstable and decomposes rapidly in a self-accelerating process as the decomposition generates heat, which accelerates the decomposition of the compound. This means that a main charge made up of such a compound must be mixed at the last minute and kept cool to prevent its breakdown. The fact that the training took place at high altitude in the FATA during very cold winter temperatures affected this concentration process as well as the stability of the main charge.

To set off this main charge, Suri taught Sidique and Tanweer to use a small amount (up to 10 grams) of HMTD, a powerful high explosive but very unstable as it detonates upon shock, friction, and heat, which makes it unsafe for commercial or military use. It is relatively easy to manufacture from hydrogen peroxide and hexamine in the presence of an acid as a catalyst. This detonator is inserted into the main charge and can be ignited by the filament of a small light bulb connected to a battery. The advantage of using two types of explosives, the main charge and the initiator, is safety. Although the main charge is unstable, it is less sensitive than the initiator to detonation. All the ingredients were available in Britain at various shops. At the time, there was no monitoring of hydrogen peroxide, the main ingredients of both the main charge and detonator.

Rauf recalled that Sidique and Tanweer detonated a 300-gram hydrogen peroxide mixture in the tribal areas. "Sidique was always saying to me, 'I hope these mixtures are as good as you say they are.' After he tested the mixtures, he was very happy." Rauf spent a lot of time with the duo. They would sit and talk for long periods. He later stressed that getting to know them so well really helped later when it came to communicating with them after they returned to Britain.<sup>125</sup>

Meanwhile, Saleem and Ullah had a miserable time at their "camp." Saleem later remembered, "The house that we were staying in had doors, but it had no windows, had like a plastic sheet in front of the windows and in them four/five/six weeks, I hardly took my clothes off, because it was extremely cold. Even when I'm—fall asleep, you had to keep your clothes on. The only time we took the clothes off was maybe when you were—



occasional bath or something like that." They could not get out, were cooped up in the house all the time, and prepared their own food; "eating the same kidney beans every day was difficult."<sup>126</sup> A family next door dropped off chapatti and naan for them in the early afternoon. Saleem got homesick. Three other Pakistanis from the tribal belt, who spoke only Pashtu, trained with them. Their training consisting mainly of physical exercise, such as push-ups and crawling, mostly in the house. They learned how to dismantle AK-47s and rolled around with them, but never got to fire them so as not to alert the neighbors. They never received any instructions in explosives. Their trainer came only in the morning and finished up by one o'clock. The students were stuck in the compound by themselves the rest of the day.

After about three or four weeks, Sidique and Tanweer came one evening. "When I first saw him [Sidique]," Ullah later recalled, "I was really happy. . . . I thought we were going to be chilling together now like we initially planned. . . . But then the brothers just told me straight they are going back to England. I was really disappointed about that. . . . They told me . . . we are going to go back and do a couple of things for the brothers, you lot just lie out here and I thought this was not my plans, my plans were to stay with you brothers and to ride out this thing together. . . . [Ullah asked] 'what's going on,' because Hasib was supposed to be arriving soon . . . and they go, 'don't worry about him, he is riding with us.' So, I thought cool, whatever."<sup>127</sup> Sidique and Tanweer left after an hour.

### The Martyrdom Videos

Sidique and Tanweer met Rauf in Islamabad. They discussed potential targets: the Bank of England, the upcoming G-8 summit in Scotland, scheduled for 6–8 July 2005, or the London Underground. Rauf and Sidique agreed on a communication plan between them for after his return. Rauf instructed them to lay low for three weeks in case British authorities might monitor them after their return. He insisted that they make a martyrdom tape and supervised its creation. Rauf was annoyed because there was no natural light in the apartment. Sidique and Tanweer were at first reluctant because of their shyness but Abu Ubaydah ordered them to do it.<sup>128</sup>

In his tape, which was later aired on 1 September 2005, Sidique declared,

I and thousands like me are forsaking everything for what we believe. Our driving motivation doesn't come from tangible commodities that this world has to offer. Our religion is Islam. . . . Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support of them makes you directly responsible, just as I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters. Until we feel security, you will be our targets. And until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight. We are at war and I am a soldier. Now, you will taste the reality of this situation.

Later, Sidique referred to "today's heroes like our beloved Sheikh Osama bin Laden, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and all the other brothers and sisters that are fighting."<sup>129</sup>

Tanweer also made a tape, which was released on 6 July 2006, on the anniversary of the bombing:

To the non-Muslims of Britain, you may wonder what you have done to deserve this. You are those who vote in governments, who . . . continue to this day to oppress our children, brothers and sisters, from the east to the west, in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq and Chechnya. Your government has openly supported the genocide of more than 150,000 Muslims in Faluja. You offered . . . military support for the U.S. and Israel in the massacre of our children in Palestine. You are directly responsible. . . . You have openly declared war on Islam. . . . We are one hundred percent committed to the cause of Islam. We love death the way you love life. . . . I tell all of you British citizens to stop your support of your lying British government and the so called war on terror and ask yourselves why would thousands of men be ready to give their lives for the cause of Muslims?<sup>130</sup>

Sidique and Tanweer returned to Britain on 8 February 2005. Meanwhile at the camp, Saleem and Ullah were getting tired of the boring routine and the cold. After another week or two after Sidique's visit, Saleem told Ullah, "Listen, I can't handle this, this is too difficult." Ullah felt the same: "We were just in more like a cell . . . in a house for five or six weeks and we were not allowed out of the house, it was really claustrophobic and I



just got sick and tired of it." They asked for the main person. "We told him that our tickets are booked for 26th February to head back to UK. . . . There were still about three weeks or four weeks left at that time—so he says to us, 'when you go back to Pakistan . . . stay in Pakistan for the . . . next couple of weeks and just behave like tourists . . . stay in hotels and go visiting sites.'" Ullah and Saleem stayed at modest hotels in Rawalpindi and Lahore, where they went to restaurants, took photographs, and enjoyed being tourists. They returned to Britain on schedule.<sup>131</sup>

### Back Home

There is little information about the conspirators from the time of their return to the bombings. They had intentionally distanced themselves from their former friends and their actions must be reconstructed from the few traces they left behind.

As soon as he returned, Ullah went to see Tanweer.

I've hugged him and everything . . . usually he's happy to see me. So, I go, "What's going on, man? What you guys going on about, you know, flipping heck? Let me chill with you." And he goes, "No, bruv, you shouldn't even be here. Sid would be vexed if he found out you were here. . . ." I go, "Come on, what's going on? . . . You're not going to do nothing, innit? What you guys getting up to?" and he goes, "No, we're just chilling with the brothers, we're just going to do a couple of things with the brothers, that's it." . . . I did feel really . . . left out and sad. I was thinking what's going on here, man, I've been with the brothers for a long time and they've just dropped me like a hot potato.<sup>132</sup>

About a week after his return, Sidique came to Saleem's house because he was upset that Saleem and Ullah had not stayed in Pakistan for two months as he had instructed them to do. He told Saleem that since they had come back from Pakistan, they were "hot" and they should keep their distance from him and Tanweer. "I didn't really think much of it," Saleem later recalled. "I mean I started hanging around with 'em in 2004, for the only purpose to go to training camp. Before that, I weren't even hanging around with these guys."<sup>133</sup> After these encounters, Saleem and Ullah stayed away from Sidique and Tanweer, with rare polite greetings at the mosque.

Trying to improve his relationship with his wife, Saleem spent more time at home, which left Ullah on his own. He drifted back to his friend Kavish, who did drugs. Ullah followed suit and abused Ecstasy and cocaine. He stopped praying but couldn't resume his fraudulent activities because of his poor credit history. Hussain also kept his distance from Ullah, Saleem, and Shakil. One of them ran into Hussain at the mosque and asked him why he no longer called. Hussain explained that Sidique had given him the choice of hanging with him and Tanweer or their former group, but he could not do both. He had chosen Sidique and Tanweer.<sup>134</sup>

Right after his return, Tanweer contacted his former girlfriend A. They had had a secret relationship four years earlier but it had ended because one of them moved away. Tanweer texted her and mentioned he had been in Pakistan for a few months. They kept in contact by text for the next three months. In March, Tanweer's father bought him a red Mercedes.<sup>135</sup>

Rauf explained in his report that Sidique and Tanweer began to buy bomb components at different stores: hydrogen peroxide in garden stores, hexamine in camping stove fuel, and citric acid anywhere as it was easily available. The Coroner's Inquests showed that Hussain searched for local hydroponics stores on his computers. On 22 February, one of the conspirators bought two five-liter bottles of Oxyplus liquid oxygen and three days later bought four five-liter bottles of the same product at two different stores in Huddersfield. This was a huge quantity for this product, which contained 17.5 percent hydrogen peroxide in aqueous solution.<sup>136</sup> Rauf wrote that Sidique had ruled out attacking the G-8 summit because it would require too much explosive material and settled on attacking the London Underground.<sup>137</sup>

Around 15 March, Sidique bought three prepaid unregistered cell phones dedicated to operations, kept one, and gave the other two to Tanweer and Hussain. With them, they contacted each other, chemical suppliers, vehicle hire companies, and landlords of their bomb factories. Between 22 February and 15 June 2005, there were 41 telephone contacts between these operational phones and hydroponics outlets. At first, there was some leakage, meaning that a few calls were to friends and family, but soon the conspirators became more disciplined with their operational phones.<sup>138</sup>

On 18 March, Sidique called Lindsay from a nonoperational phone. It does not seem that Lindsay was part of the conspiracy at first. They had very little contact with him until Sidique called him. He did not get an operational phone in the first round and was still in contact with Shakil



and Ullah. He came to visit his sister in Huddersfield for Easter, which came in late March that year. He called Ullah on 24 March: "I've come down to Leeds, do you want to meet up?" Ullah could not meet him because he had been smoking that day and Lindsay would not approve. So he kept delaying him with all kinds of excuses but finally agreed to meet at a takeaway shop. Ullah said at trial, "I think Jamaal found out . . . that I started smoking weed and everything . . . and he started giving me vibes in the sense that . . . he's going to start giving me a lecture. . . . He wouldn't say it in a rude way, but I knew he were going to start giving me one, yeah, so I had to make my exit. . . . I just said to him: 'Listen, brother, I've just got to go somewhere.'" <sup>139</sup> This was the last time Ullah saw Lindsay.

Shortly after that, Lindsay joined the conspiracy. He no longer saw his other friends and got a phone in the next three rounds of operational phone purchases. In total, there were 15 operational cell phones: one set of three and three sets of four. Sidique bought them all, and the conspirators switched to the new operational phones simultaneously. It seems that Sidique first stored the various chemical purchases at his new house. His neighbor later remembered, "He was taking bags out of the car boot and into the house. I thought this was strange because he was making too many trips. I saw him carrying a toolbox on one of the trips. . . . He kept opening and shutting the boot like he had something to hide. . . . The man's friends were all in the house. There were three of them." She recognized Tanweer and his red Mercedes. <sup>140</sup>

#### The First Bomb Factory on Chapeltown Road

On 10 April, Sidique rented an apartment allegedly for a student friend. The landlord later remembered, "I took him to the vacant room at . . . Chapeltown Road. . . . He asked a number of questions about who else was living in other rooms in the building. He said that his friend . . . would not like loud music and things like that disturbing him. He said that he would most likely rent the room but would need to show it to his friend." <sup>141</sup> The next day, Sidique came with Hussain, whom he introduced as Imran Mirza. They made the deal and "Mirza" paid the owner a deposit and three months' rent in advance in cash. The next day, Tanweer drove Sidique and Hussain in his Mercedes to the Chapeltown apartment and they unloaded material into the apartment. The three were often seen at the apartment, while Lindsay came but less frequently. <sup>142</sup>

During April, Sidique made repeated cash withdrawals from an account with HSBC and took out a personal loan for £10,000. Lindsay also withdrew £300 several times and made several applications for credit supported by claims that he was still working at a place he had left a long time before. He started an eBay account and with it bought wireless spy color cameras, hidden video cameras, miniature bug detectors, security alarms, gas masks, and the like. <sup>143</sup>

The first detected call from Rauf in Pakistan to Sidique came on 23 April 2005. Only Sidique communicated with Rauf via e-mails, phone calls, and Yahoo Messenger. They changed e-mail addresses and phone number on a monthly basis, notifying themselves of the new contact information in codes. <sup>144</sup>

The owner of the Chapeltown apartment returned from abroad in mid-May and was told that there was an electrical overload in the building as the main fuse box switch kept switching off. He went to investigate the source of this overload. He knocked at the apartment and there was no response. He had a spare key. "I attempted to open the door but could not get the key in because of a key in the lock from the inside. This indicated someone was inside but they did not answer the door." He called his tenant on the phone and Hussain came down from the room to talk to him outside. "He told me that he was boiling water in the room on a portable stove. I asked why he was not using the kitchen, and he said it was not as effective as the stove he had in his room. He did not seem to be bothered by it and he said he did not have anything that would cause a problem in his room other than the stove." <sup>145</sup> After this visit, Sidique changed the lock on the apartment.

Rauf called Sidique's operational cell phone on 9, 10, and 12 May, and nine times on 14 May. <sup>146</sup> In his report, Rauf wrote that Sidique began to boil down hydrogen peroxide but was unsure he had concentrated it to the correct strength. Rauf provided him with technical guidance to ensure he got the bomb mixture right. This may have been the day that this discussion took place. Rauf's phone calls continued until 2 July 2005. <sup>147</sup>

On 27 May 2005 in the evening, Lindsay and two accomplices were involved in an armed robbery in Luton. Lindsey brandished a handgun at a woman and her baby. They robbers got into a car, whose license plate was traced back to Lindsay. A neighbor had reported this robbery but the victim was never identified because she filed no complaint. The crime was never adequately investigated because the officer in charge went on vacation



shortly thereafter and then on a training course until after the bombings. A semiautomatic pistol of the kind described in the crime was found in the trunk of Lindsay's car with his DNA and fingerprints on it.<sup>148</sup>

Sidique went with Tanweer and Naveed Fiaz on a white-water rafting outing in Wales on 4 June 2005. Around that time, Tanweer asked his secret girlfriend to meet for the first time in years. She later testified, "He had blond parts on his hair and eyebrows and . . . the hair on his arms." She asked him about it and he replied that it was "bleached from Pakistan." She found it strange. He told her he was working in Wales. "We just felt quite strong—obviously, we had feelings for each other, so we wanted our relationship to progress." They continued to text each other until the bombings.<sup>149</sup>

### Second Bomb Factory on Alexandra Grove

On 15 June, Sidique arranged for Lindsay to sublease a Leeds Council flat on Alexandra Grove, whose renter had gone to Egypt. The conspirators emptied out the Chapeltown apartment and resumed their bomb making at the new Alexandra Grove flat. When the Chapeltown landlord broke into his room after the bombings, "I found the room in a mess but empty. I looked around and saw the floor was littered with rubbish and boxes. I noticed that one of the boxes was for a gas mask and one of them was for a double-ring, portable hob, similar to the ones you can buy from Argos."<sup>150</sup> During June, all the conspirators were working on the bombs at the Alexandra Grove apartment and were eating Chinese takeout food.

The making of the bombs would have smelled badly enough to make the room very difficult to work in. Both Tanweer and Lindsay bought face masks from shops and on the Internet. It appears that the bombs were made with the windows open but with net curtains taped to the walls to avoid being seen. The fumes killed off the top of plants just outside the windows. The mixtures would also have had a strong bleaching effect. Both Tanweer and Hussain's families noticed that their hair had become lighter over the weeks before the bombings. They explained this as the effect of chlorine from swimming pools (they and Sidique regularly swam together). They also wore shower caps at the bomb factory to protect their hair.<sup>151</sup>

### The Perpetrators' Love Lives

On 20 June, Lindsay was practicing boxing at a community center in Aylesbury. A 17-year-old girl named Nicki noticed he was interested in her and

they exchanged phone numbers. He told her his name was Tyrone. He picked her up outside her home late that evening and drove for an hour. When he dropped her off, he kissed her and arranged to meet during the day. He took her to a shopping center. He asked her whether she could get hold of a gun for him. He said "he was going to London with some of his mates to teach some people a lesson. . . . It was to do with drugs," Nicki later recalled. There was something wrong with his gun but she told him she could not help him. "We drove the rest of the way home in uncomfortable silence and he turned the music on."<sup>152</sup> He saw her again the next day and he read to her poems praising al Qaeda and Islam. Three days later, on 25 June, she saw him cash a check and receive a phone call, which made him very agitated. He told her that he had to go and drove her back home. "He tried to control his temper and said he needed to prepare himself. I asked him what did he need to prepare himself for, and he said 'shooting the people who need to be taught a lesson in London.'" The call was from Sidique, who had just received a call from Rauf in Pakistan.<sup>153</sup> Nothing more is known about it.

On 28 June, Sidique, Tanweer, and Lindsay were captured on CCTV at Luton station around 8:10 AM. They bought tickets and boarded a train to King's Cross station in London, arriving at 8:55 AM. They were photographed together again at Baker Street station around midday and again at King's Cross at 12:50 PM. They returned to Luton, arriving at approximately 1:40 PM. A chart of times taken to travel between stations was later found among Lindsay's belongings. Other tickets were also found at the bomb factory, suggesting other visits to London dating back to mid-March.<sup>154</sup>

The next day, Lindsay called Nicki and told her he had to lie low. He texted her that he suffered a minor wound in his back but had not fired his gun. They continued their texting and on 1 July she wrote that she did not want to lose him because she had started to have feelings for him.<sup>155</sup>

In the weeks before the bombings, Lindsay made a number of purchases with overdrawn checks. Bank investigators visited his home on the day after the bombings. His wife later told the authorities that he had spent less time at home lately, and when he was home, he locked himself away in the computer room. Shortly before the bombings, she had allegedly confronted him about text messages she discovered on his cell phone, apparently from a girlfriend, and threw him out of the house.<sup>156</sup>

Meanwhile Tanweer texted his girlfriend and asked her to spend the night with him. They went to a hotel on 1 July. They talked about themselves and their future. He seemed normal and told her he would go away



for a week in Scotland and would call her when he got back. He called her three days later and told her he would call her when he got back from his trip. This was the last time she heard from him.<sup>157</sup>

On 4 July, Sidique took his car to be serviced. Tanweer rented a Nissan Micra and paid for four days. He ran into a friend, who noticed the discoloration in his hair. Tanweer told him it had something to do with sunlight. He had started wearing sunglasses and was now getting headaches.<sup>158</sup> He told his family he was going to go to Manchester to visit a cousin but left his car at home. On 5 July, a neighbor saw Sidique come out of his house and put things in the Nissan Micra: "He made two trips and was carrying a rucksack and a hold-all on one trip. I saw him put them into the boot. He also had some carrier bags. I did not see where from, and he put these into the back of the car. The man was on his own at this time."<sup>159</sup>

On 5 July, Lindsay texted Nicki, "I love you more than you can imagine, I want to stay with you forever. Are you going to start being more loving to me? We will do everything, we will go all over the place. Ever been to New York?" He later called her and asked her if she would like to come up to London on the evening of 6 July. He said he had been paid a lot of money for what had happened in London a few days earlier. She told him to call next morning. He called early in the morning and asked her if she was ready. "The more I thought about going," she later told the inquest, "the more I worried I got that I would get into trouble or meet the people involved in the shooting. . . . I said 'I have changed my mind, I am really tired, I need to go to sleep.' He said, 'Come on, it will be nice to spend some quality time together and we'll have some bad boy room service.' I replied, 'Seriously, I'm really tied up, I need to go to sleep.' He said, 'Okay, then.' He was fine about it. I asked him if he was busy on 14 July as it was my birthday. He said, 'I might be around then, but then again I might not.' He said he would speak to me soon, he loved me and he hung up."<sup>160</sup>

On 5 July at around 1:30 PM, CCTV cameras picked up Sidique taking his wife to Dewsbury Hospital.<sup>161</sup> Rauf wrote that Sidique's wife suffered a miscarriage just before the planned attack but he decided to proceed with the plot.<sup>162</sup> But he did not have any more contact with Sidique after a seven-minute telephone conversation on 2 July.

### The London Bombings

Some detectives testifying at the Coroner's Inquests believed that the bombings were scheduled for 6 July. That day, at 4:35 AM, Sidique texted Lindsay,

"Havin major prob cant make time wil ring ya when I got it sorted wait at home." About one hour later, Sidique texted, "Il ring ya in afternoon twoish."<sup>163</sup> Around that time, Sidique and Tanweer bought 15 bags of ice at a local Asda-Walmart store to keep the explosive mixture cool.<sup>164</sup> Rashid Rauf had instructed him to leave the tops off the explosives-filled containers to prevent their overheating. The bombs were made at the last moment to prevent degradation and inadvertent detonation.<sup>165</sup> The mixture was poured into thin plastic bags but it is very reactive and tends to heat itself to the point where it will actually either just boil away or detonate. To keep the mixture cool, the ice packs were inserted into the bags along with the detonator.<sup>166</sup> As a further precaution, they stored the bombs in breathable Gore-Tex bags to prevent the accumulation of gas. "With the blessings of Allah I think it rained on the day of the attacks which means the weather was cooler," Rauf wrote.<sup>167</sup>

On the evening of 6 July, Tanweer went to the park and saw friends playing cricket. Ullah later recalled:

Kaki is parked up and I . . . shook his hand. . . . "What's going on? How are you?" and everything. He is just saying he is fine and he's chillin out and he's cool, and I noticed . . . his red hair . . . and his beard were going a bit yellow, and I asked him: "What's going on with your hair? What have you done?" He goes: "Nothing, I've just been swimming a lot and it's the chlorine." . . . On that day, he made a bit more of an effort. . . . Over the months, when we used to play football and cricket, he'd just come and shake my hand, and that's it. He'd just carry on with the game, finish the game and he'd chip off. . . . This time, he came up to me and he chatted to me a little bit more. He was asking me: "How are you? What's going on? How have you been keeping?" I were kind of happy at that time, I was thinking, 'cos I don't want to be smoking anymore, thinking, they've done what they need to do, yeah? And, slowly but surely, we will start chilling again.<sup>168</sup>

On the morning of 7 July 2005, Lindsay arrived at Luton station parking lot around 5 AM and waited an hour and a half for Sidique, Tanweer, and Hussain to arrive in the Nissan Micra with the bombs. They left some smaller bombs in the Nissan. They all went to the station together, boarded a train to London around 7:40 AM, and arrived together at King's Cross



around 8:23 AM. They hugged, appearing happy, even euphoric, and split up around 8:30 AM in the Underground, each going in a separate direction.

At 8:50 AM, Sidique exploded himself, killing six other people and injuring over 160 others, in the Underground near Edgware Road station; Lindsay exploded himself, killing 26 people and injuring more than 340, in the Underground between King's Cross and Russell Square stations; and Tanweer exploded himself, killing seven people and injuring more than 170 others, in the Underground between Liverpool Street and Aldgate stations. Apparently, Hussain's device malfunctioned, and he calmly exited the Underground, boarded the No. 30 bus, and detonated himself at Tavistock Square, killing 13 people and injuring over 110, about one hour after his friends. The bombers were identified over the next few days. The Alexandra Grove bomb factory was discovered on 12 July with much of the bomb-making equipment still in place. The DNA of Sidique, Tanweer, and Hussain were discovered there.<sup>169</sup>

On 22 March 2007, Shipon Ullah, who had just changed his name to Waheed Ali a week before, and Mohammed Shakil were arrested at Manchester Airport as they were boarding a plane for Karachi and later charged with conspiracy to attend a place used for terrorist training. Sadeer Saleem was also arrested the same day, and all three were later charged with conspiracy to cause an explosion for their mid-December trip to London, which the prosecution claimed to be a reconnaissance trip for the later bombings. They were tried on these charges from 10 April to 1 August 2008, but the trial ended in a hung jury. They were retried on 13 January 2009. On 28 April 2009, a jury acquitted them of the conspiracy to cause an explosion, but convicted Ali (Ullah) and Shakil of conspiracy to attend a terrorist camp. Saleem was immediately released. On 29 April 2009, Ali and Shakil were each sentenced to seven years in prison.

Lindsay's wife, Samantha Lewthwaite, became the "White Widow" and was allegedly connected with terrorist activities in Nairobi about a decade later.

Two weeks after the London bombings, another set of conspirators tried what was essentially a copycat attack.

## CHAPTER 4

### VIVACE

#### THE FAILED COPYCAT LONDON BOMBINGS

**EXACTLY TWO WEEKS AFTER** the London bombings in July 2005, four would-be suicide bombers tried to duplicate them, but the bombs did not detonate because of the conspirators' incompetence. A fifth one lost his nerve and got rid of his bomb. The government's investigation of this failed copycat London bombings is called Operation Vivace. While the suicide of the London bombers prevents us from viewing the bombings from an insider's perspective, the survival of all the failed bombers leads to a multiplicity of accounts. At trial, three of them obviously coordinated their account while a fourth one refused to cooperate with the trial and stayed silent. The fifth one turned against his comrades, providing a second account. An accomplice arrested abroad denied any knowledge of the plot in a third account. A former friend of the bombers offered a fourth account and character witnesses provided differing accounts. From a totality of the evidence, they all lied about crucial aspects of the plot to exonerate themselves. The prosecution insisted on a fifth account to try to implicate all the defendants. After the verdict, the judge, who listened carefully to the proceedings, came up with a sixth account. In this chapter, I incorporate this complex *Rashomon* story with evidence from subsequent trials and Rashid Rauf's report (a seventh account) into an eighth account.



## Osama bin London

Unlike the three other attacks in this book, which arose from al Qaeda support networks composed mostly of second-generation Pakistani immigrants, this attack came from a cluster of first-generation East African immigrants to London that emerged from a study circle that Mohammed Hussein Hamid organized in Hackney. He was born in 1957 in Tanzania in a Gujarati Muslim family and immigrated to England when he was five years old. When he was 12, he dropped out of school and embarked on a career of petty criminality and short incarcerations. He drank, smoked marijuana, and dressed sharply. He married at 20 and, after another short prison stay, settled down as a car mechanic. He separated from his wife after 10 years of marriage and kept the children. Three years later, he was addicted to crack cocaine and his habit left him destitute. His brother gave him money to go to India to kick his habit and, as soon as he landed there, he felt clean overnight and became a pious Muslim. He married a local woman and, at the age of 35, returned to London with her. They had four children and lived in a council house at Almack Road.

Around 1996, Hamid opened up the Al Quran Islamic Book Centre, on Chatsworth Road, close to his house. His store sold all things Islamic—perfumes, gowns, hats, and books. In the back, he set up some chairs for a dawah center for discussions about Islam and a crèche where children could learn about Islam. The popularity of this learning center grew, leading him to hire a teacher twice a week, he recalled at trial, “and after we finish our classes . . . somebody used to run to the kebab house or pizza house and we used to sit down there and eat and have a laugh and a joke.” This was the origin of the Friday gatherings, which were irregular because they stopped during his frequent travels. He regularly went back to India, and camping all over Europe was his passion. Over their nine-year duration, these Friday gatherings drew over 300 people and Hamid acquired the nickname “Al Quran” from his bookstore.<sup>1</sup>

Many people came to Al Quran as it was the only Islamic bookstore in the area. A blond, blue-eyed woman from Bosnia with a small child came to the store. She had been well integrated in her country and not religious, Hamid recalled, but “her husband was dragged out of the house, taken away and never to be seen. Some of her members of her family were killed and she had to run out with her children . . . into some forest and escape . . . out of the country.” From other visitors, he learned about atrocities in

Kashmir and “heard stories about Chechnya . . . about two or three children dying every day in the refugee camp.”<sup>2</sup> This sparked his interest in world politics.

The 9/11 attacks further politicized Hamid. He refused to believe that they were caused by Muslims and instead adhered to sinister conspiracy theories that American forces carried them out to give them an excuse to invade and oppress Muslim countries. He became involved in support of the flood of Afghan refugees created by the Western invasion of their country. Across the street from Al Quran was the office of the Islamic Medical Association (IMA), which collected medical supplies, clothes, and food for them.<sup>3</sup> “I’m right opposite it,” Hamid later recalled, “and . . . the guy opposite asked me . . . to give out these leaflets. . . . I knew him from when he opened the shop. . . . He asked me . . . to drive a van to Kingston Hospital, other hospitals to . . . collect hospital equipment.” Hamid invited the IMA volunteers to his house for a meal, where they discussed world events. Eventually, they collected enough to fill out seven 40-foot containers, which they shipped by sea to Pakistan.<sup>4</sup>

In early January 2002, Hamid flew to Karachi to clear the containers with customs and transfer the supplies onto small trucks. He hired a small escort and traveled with the convoy to massive refugee camps, where he distributed food, shoes, and warm clothing and blankets. He also delivered medical supplies to hospitals in Spin Baldak, Qandahar, and Qalat, where the convoy came under small-arms fire. Hamid wanted to fire an AK-47 from his escort guards, but they refused, he later remembered, “because the noise is so loud . . . people are going to panic . . . and might start fighting . . . thinking they’re being attacked.” He flew back to England on 21 March 2002.<sup>5</sup>

Not much is known about Hamid for the next year and a half. He gathered around him a few young politicized Muslims, who came to Al Quran and helped him. The store was not a financial success and Hamid had to rely on charity and volunteers. One of the first to volunteer was 15-year-old Shakeel Ishmael, a local boy who ran the store when Hamid was away. To proselytize beyond his store, they set up a dawah stall around mosques in London, where he gave out free pamphlets and books on Islam and asked for contributions. They also participated in Stop the War demonstrations and went to Speakers’ Corner, Hyde Park, where Hamid disputed the conventional wisdom about the 9/11 attacks. His political protests provoked different reactions. A few people were interested in what he was



saying and engaged him in discussion while others felt offended by his appearance—long beard and Muslim gown—and zealous defense of assertive Islam. They accused him of being a “Taliban” and called him “Osama bin Laden.” With his provocative sense of humor, Hamid told them that his name was “Osama bin London.”<sup>6</sup>

### The East African Immigrants

During Ramadan 2003, which was in November, two friends, Muktar Said Ibrahim and Yasin Hassan Omar, came over to Hamid’s stall at Edmonton Mosque. Hamid recognized Omar, who had previously bought some perfume at Al Quran.<sup>7</sup> Ibrahim was a 25-year-old born in Eritrea, whose family had fled the Ethiopian-Eritrean War and come to London as refugees when he was 12. He spoke Arabic at the time. When he was 15, in June 1993, he and a friend molested a girl in an alleyway. They held her up against a wall and fondled her breasts. Ibrahim rubbed his groin against her body. He later pled guilty to indecent assault and received a supervision order for a year. He smoked marijuana and left school at the age of 16 with two GCSEs. In April 1995, he robbed a 77-year-old woman. A month later, while still on bail, he and five others robbed and beat up two men. He pled guilty to conspiracy to rob and was sentenced to three years for the first offense and an additional two years for the second one. He was released from prison in September 1998.<sup>8</sup> He then lived on government benefits, supplemented them with work at restaurants, and got a council flat at Farleigh Road in January 2002. He was still not religious.<sup>9</sup>

Ibrahim had befriended two Eritrean brothers, Siraj and Abdu Ali, who had immigrated around the same time he did and been placed in foster care. In 1994, when the older Siraj became 18 and too old to stay in foster care, the council placed the two brothers in a flat, 65 Curtis House. After his release from prison, Ibrahim frequently came to visit them.<sup>10</sup> There, in 2000, he met their neighbor, 19-year-old Yasin Omar, born in Somalia, who had come to Britain in 1992 with two sisters and a cousin as refugees from the Somali Civil War. He was placed with the same foster family as the Ali brothers and Omar lived with them for two years until they moved to Curtis House. When Omar turned 18, he too moved to Curtis House, into flat 58.

At school, Omar had become inseparable from Matthew Dixon, who was born in South Africa to a South African father and an English mother. Dixon’s family moved to London during his childhood. Omar also met

Adel Yahya Ahmed at a bowling alley. He was born in Ethiopia and lived in Yemen before he and his sister came to London to live with relatives in 1991. He had bad knees that eventually required three surgical operations. At school, Yahya had befriended an English classmate, Stephen Bentley. Soon, the two pairs of friends from different schools—Omar and Dixon; Yahya and Bentley—grew very close and were occasionally joined by a Jewish schoolmate. They used to go out to nightclubs and cinemas.

After graduating in 1998, the four boys went their separate ways. Dixon and Bentley went away to different universities and became progressively more distant from their East African friends, seeing them only on holidays. Yahya, with seven GCSEs, enrolled in a local computer course. Omar, with two GCSEs, studied science, including chemistry, and experimented with hydrogen peroxide, but dropped out in the fall of 1999. Around that time, he started praying five times a day and went to mosque regularly. Bentley, who had converted to Islam, and Yahya also turned more religious. Omar and Yahya became closer and prayed at three different mosques: the nearby Edmonton Mosque, the large and prestigious Regent’s Park Mosque, and the Finsbury Park Mosque, where they listened to Abu Hamza and got books. When Bentley and Dixon came back in London, they would occasionally accompany their friends. Omar became a supporter of the Palestinians and the Taliban rule in Afghanistan, which he considered a “true Islamic state.”<sup>11</sup>

In April and May 2000, respectively, Ibrahim and Omar were granted indefinite stays in Britain. Omar eventually introduced Ibrahim to Yahya and, at the time of the 9/11 attacks, they were 20, 23, and 19 years of age respectively. Omar did not believe that Osama bin Laden had conducted the attacks because Abu Hamza claimed to know bin Laden and that bin Laden did not carry them out. Nevertheless, Omar told his friends that they were a “good thing” and he supported them. He participated in the 30 September 2001 Al Aqsa National Demonstration on the first anniversary of the Intifada in solidarity with the Palestinians and out of “respect for the martyrs” killed by Israeli bombs. He, Yahya, and Ibrahim participated in the Stop the War Campaign. Gradually, Omar got disillusioned with large legitimate protests because they did not have any effect on Prime Minister Tony Blair. There is very little known about Ibrahim in the year after the attacks except that he continued to draw unemployment benefits. In September 2002, Yahya started a two-year college computer practitioner course.<sup>12</sup>



In January 2003, Ibrahim went to the Sudan for two months. He financed his trip by renting out his council flat. This trip is shrouded in mystery. A prosecution witness later testified that Ibrahim boasted to him that he had undergone jihadi training and learned how to fire an RPG. At trial, Ibrahim denied he ever went for training or fired an RPG and claimed instead to have relaxed and visited relatives, in Khartoum, in the south, and on the border with Eritrea. However, his older sister testified that she had never even met these relatives and they had never been close to them. She also did not know at the time that her brother went to the Sudan.<sup>13</sup>

By 2003, al Qaeda had left the Sudan seven years earlier. In view of the ongoing skirmishes between Eritrea and Ethiopia, it is possible that Ibrahim met with some Eritrean militants at the border and might have fired an RPG. But it is very unlikely that he ever got any neojihadi military training, as no such organization had any camps there at the time.

After his return, Ibrahim started wearing a traditional Muslim gown and selling shoes, handbags, nightgowns, and African artifacts (imported from Thailand) at a small shop five days a week for about £35 a day. On weekends, he sold them at Sunday markets.<sup>14</sup> He reconnected with Omar and Yahya. Although Omar prayed at the Finchley Mosque and Ibrahim at the Turkish-run Azizi Mosque, they occasionally went to pray in the street outside the locked Finsbury Park Mosque to listen to Abu Hamza. They also listened to his tapes as well as those of Sheikh Abdullah al-Faisal at home and discussed the situation in Iraq, Chechnya, and Afghanistan.

#### Mohamed and Hamdi

When Ibrahim and Omar met Hamid at his dawah stall during Ramadan 2003, Omar recognized Hamid and asked him whether he was the "guy at the bookshop." Hamid confirmed that he was, and Ibrahim and Omar bought Islamic gowns from him. Hamid also recognized them from their frequent soccer games at a nearby park and invited them to come to the Friday evenings at his house.<sup>15</sup> They came occasionally and met his assistant Ishmael as well as others like Ramzi Mohamed, who had met Hamid at Speakers' Corner.

Mohamed was a 22-year-old, born in Somalia, who came to England in 1998 and was put in social services with his younger brother, Wahbi. The next year, Mohamed turned 18 and had to move out into council housing in Hayes, leaving his brother behind. He was granted a definite leave to stay in Britain for four years.<sup>16</sup> In Hayes, he met 21-year-old Hamdi Sherif, an

Ethiopian immigrant who had come to England three years earlier under the false identity of Hussein Osman from Somalia.<sup>17</sup> He had immigrated to Italy in 1992 to join an older brother living there before moving to Britain four years later. At the end of 1997, he started dating Yeshi Girma, another Ethiopian immigrant, who had also previously lived in Italy. Mohamed and Hamdi became close friends, chased girls in clubs and at house parties, and smoked marijuana. Girma got pregnant and at first wanted to get an abortion but Hamdi asked her to keep it. Their son, Imran, was born in 1999 and, shortly thereafter, she moved to a council flat at Blair House. Girma had begun to follow Islam but Hamdi continued his secular lifestyle. Despite being cold to Girma, he came regularly to visit his son. Meanwhile, Mohamed also impregnated his girlfriend, Azeb, from Sweden. Their son, Adam, was born three months premature in 2000 and Azeb returned to Sweden for extensive medical care for her son. Mohamed's bother, Wahbi, became more religious around this time and influenced his brother and Hamdi to visit local mosques.<sup>18</sup>

In 2001 and 2002, Mohamed worked at bars and lived with Azeb and their son in Elephant and Castle. Hamdi started dating a Christian Ethiopian woman, Almaz, in mid-2002. He still visited his son once a week and Girma, determined to get him back and marry him, got pregnant during one of these visits. He again wanted her to have an abortion and took her to an abortion clinic, but once inside she told the staff that she wanted to keep the baby. He stopped seeing her but resumed when their second son, Marwan, was born in May 2003.<sup>19</sup>

By that time, Mohamed and Hamdi had become politically active and religious. They participated in the huge 15 February 2003 Stop the War march and went to Speakers' Corner. Mohamed quit the bar job and worked at a bagel place and then a merchandising company. In July 2003, he moved out of the flat he shared with Azeb because she was not Muslim and moved in with his brother Wahbi. She gave birth to their second son, Malik, three months later. Mohamed returned to see her every day to help her with some of the household chores.<sup>20</sup>

Likewise, Hamdi changed overnight, went to the mosque in Brixton, shaved his head, grew a beard, and completely stopped listening to music. Almaz remembered,

Toward the end of our relationship he used to read a lot of books and watch videos. . . . He used to talk about Iranian [I believe she meant Iraqi] people. They were abused . . . [and] killed in Iraq and



it was America's fault. . . . All Muslims are brothers and sisters, even if you don't know them and they are killed, it will affect you. He watched the films . . . every day. He thought the Americans were responsible for the abuses of the Middle East countries. He used to read religious books because he didn't know anything about his culture. . . . He had to start learning "my religion and stuff because I am behind, I should know this stuff by now, but look at me, I am old enough but I don't know most of them so I have to catch up."

He now approved of the 9/11 attacks. She broke up with him because she could not see herself converting to Islam. Devastated, Hamdi returned to Girma, who consoled him by conceiving another son in early 2004. Their relationship improved. He went to the mosque every day in the afternoon, and the rest of the time, he prayed at home. He worked as a night shift delivery driver and hung out with the Mohamed brothers.<sup>21</sup>

#### The Emergence of a Martial Social Identity

During the winter of 2003–2004, Mohammed Hamid hosted Shakeel, Ibrahim, Omar, and Mohamed at his house on Friday evenings for talk, food, and laughter. Their presence at these gatherings later gave rise to the accusation that Hamid radicalized them there. The participants of course protested that these were innocent discussions about food, religion, and everyday life. However, a wiretap planted in Hamid's house in September 2005, after the failed London bombings, showed that the gatherings were deeply political and glorified British foreign fighters. The participants distrusted the mainstream media and discussed what was really going on in Iraq and Afghanistan. They were very security conscious, had to hand in their phones to Hamid during the sessions, and were urged not to talk about their discussions to anyone outside the group, including their wives. Since the probe became active after September 2005, it is not known whether the same security measures or discussions were already in place two years earlier.

It might be easy to dismiss these discussions as fantasy because of Hamid's great exaggerations and blatant lies, such as claiming that he had been acquitted nine times by British juries, hosted Mullah Omar, the head of the Taliban, at his house for two months, and sent many people to fight in

Afghanistan.<sup>22</sup> The discussions, though, facilitated the emergence and hardening of a politicized social identity among the participants, who imagined themselves as part of a political community protesting against British government's policies toward Muslims at home and abroad. Furthermore, the violence of the discourse opened the possibility of violent forms of protests against the British state and society.

Around that time, Hamid closed Al Quran to save on its £150 monthly rent. He had shifted his proselytism to his dawah stall where Shakeel and he handed out Islamic literature, invited people to Islam, and solicited charity contributions. In March 2004, he went to India for about a month to visit friends and relatives. Shakeel asked Ibrahim to help him at the dawah stall. When Hamid came back from India, he and Shakeel moved the stall to Green Wood and eventually Marble Arch. Ibrahim joined them and gave up his job to devote his life to dawah full time. Omar came to help very occasionally.<sup>23</sup>

Hamid also organized weekend outings for his followers after his return from India. He had identified a year-round camping site in Cumbria. These outings were an opportunity for him to show off and for his young followers to pretend to be soldiers and prove how tough they were, capable of withstanding the rugged geography of Afghanistan. One such outing took place on the 2004 May Day Bank Holiday weekend at a cost of £50–60 for each participant. Shakeel invited Ibrahim and Omar, who in turn asked Yahya to come along. Mohamed came as well and invited his best friend, Hamdi, who brought his five-year-old son to play with Hamid's children. The whole group of about 28 people, including about eight children, drove up from London in two minibuses and two cars. This outing was significant because Ibrahim, Omar, and Yahya met Mohamed and Hamdi for the first time, after which they continued to see each other occasionally at Hamid's Friday evening gatherings.

In Cumbria, a local constable on his morning jog noticed them and returned later with a colleague to take pictures. "The people were . . . rolling forward and then jumping back up again and sort of rolling out of my sight and then appearing further down," the constable later testified at Hamid's trial. "Some of them actually were holding branches of sticks. . . . My impression was that it was as if they were practicing weapons."<sup>24</sup> The prosecution called these pretend outings "weapons training" camps that "provided instruction or training in the use of firearms wholly or partly for the purpose of preparing for terrorism."<sup>25</sup> Three former Special Forces soldiers



testified that they had observed the campers run around with twigs in their hands, pretending they were weapons, jumping around streams, and running up and down hills, and making gestures of throwing imaginary hand grenades during soccer games. Hamid of course denied that these outings had anything to do with weapons training, but later surreptitious wiretaps during them caught him saying, "those who want to train, can train. Those who don't want to train, don't train." They could climb a mountain or carry 35-kilogram loads. "Everybody is going to get up early in the morning and come jogging. . . . [Some may] do some leopard crawling." He rejected complaints that he did not provide them with enough hard training.<sup>26</sup>

The irony is that the authorities took them seriously. The notion that a bunch of immature men, hopping around in mud while making weapons' noise, is the equivalent of a real terrorist or military training camp is too ridiculous for further comment. Those who call these sophomoric pretend weekend camping sessions training camps are obviously not familiar with either military boot camps or real terrorist training camps as they existed in Afghanistan a decade before. The participants never learned anything about fighting. Nevertheless, these outings were important subjectively because they hardened the participants' martial social identity that they were mujahedin, soldiers of God, defending their imagined community. But calling them "terrorist training camps" misleads and frightens the public into believing that there was a network of trained terrorists capable of devastating British society.

#### Enter Asiedu

Around that time, Omar met the last of the conspirators, Sumaila Abubakari, at a Turkish restaurant near the Finchley Mosque. Everyone called him by his Islamic name of Ishmail. He was a happy-go-lucky 26-year-old illegal immigrant from Ghana, whose parents had converted to Islam. He was pleasant and always smiling, earning him the nickname of Smiler. After graduating from school, he worked at his father's construction business, learning painting, decorating, and gardening. His dream was to immigrate to Britain to become rich and raise a family. Because he believed it would be impossible for him to get a visa as a Muslim, he bought fake documents allowing him to get a six-month visa on 24 September 2003. After raising money for the plane fare, he arrived in London in December 2003 wearing traditional Ghanaian clothes and with £100 in his pocket. A cabbie from

Ghana recognized the clothes and sheltered him for a few days at his home. Ishmail went to the local mosque, Finchley Mosque, to ask for help and work. He volunteered to clean the mosque on a regular basis and got cleaning jobs at local supermarkets. He tried to get British citizenship by joining the British Army but was told that he needed three months left on his visa at the time of his formal interview. He returned to Ghana to renew his visa but was unable to do so and flew back to London before its expiration. In order to work, he took the identity of another Ghanaian, Manfu Asiedu, who had left his documents behind at the cabbie's house when he was hospitalized for mental problems. With them, he got a Construction Industry Scheme card under the name Asiedu.<sup>27</sup>

On an early April afternoon, Ishmail met Omar, dressed in a traditional Muslim gown, at a local Turkish shop. It was time for prayers and they went together to Finchley Mosque. Afterward, Omar invited Ishmail to a local kebab house, where they talked about themselves and the state of affairs in Africa. They later saw each other in the neighborhood and played soccer at Finchley Mosque on weekends. After a two-month absence for a job to paint another mosque, Ishmail returned to Finchley and mentioned to Omar that he was looking for a place to stay. Omar invited him to move in with him, which Ishmail did in June or July 2004. Omar already had another lodger, a 30-year-old Indian Muslim, who had a laptop computer and printer. Omar, who was not working, charged them each £30 weekly to stay in his living room.

Ishmail got to know Omar's friends, who came to visit the flat: Ibrahim, Yahya, and Dixon. Ibrahim would come with books from the dawah stall and bought two tracksuits for Ishmail from his peddling business. Omar and his friends discovered that Ishmail recited the Quran in the *warsh* style, one of the seven recognized recitation styles, commonly practiced in Africa, and they often asked him to do so at their prayer sessions.<sup>28</sup>

#### The Split Between Hamid and Ibrahim

On 11 July 2004, Yahya flew to Sana'a, Yemen, to marry an 18-year-old Yemeni through an arranged marriage. His sister had given him £2,500 for his dowry; about a thousand people came to his wedding. The newlyweds honeymooned in Ethiopia for a month, arriving on 15 September 2004. They stayed with one of Yahya's rich uncles in Addis Ababa and went swimming and to restaurants and discotheques.<sup>29</sup>



Meanwhile, back in London, Ibrahim was granted British citizenship on 30 July and now regularly manned the dawah stall with Shakeel and Hamid. Shakeel ordered books for it and Hamid continued to organize outings.<sup>30</sup> The stall attracted the attention of the police. A constable later testified that, on 5 October, Hamid "was tending a bookstall . . . [at] Marble Arch. . . . The stall was a trestle table full of books on religion based on the faith of Islam. He also had tapes under the table. He assured me that the books were for free and he was not selling them. He did however have a donation box, which I asked him to remove and warned him of [a] street trading offense."<sup>31</sup> The constable noted that he was on a hotel property but Hamid assured her he had the manager's permission, which the constable later found out was false.

On October 12, Ibrahim, Hamid, and Shakeel were at Marble Arch again and moved their table under a nearby canopy of a retail outlet when it started to rain. As one constable later recalled, they

were distributing literature from the stall and shouting out religious references. . . . It was causing a large number of people to gather, causing people to walk on to the road. . . . They needed to move because they were causing such a disturbance. . . . At first, they [said] that it was their right to put the stall here . . . to distribute this literature and they just didn't listen to me. I tried to explain the law relating to obstruction of the highway, but . . . they continued distributing literature shouting out phrases. I warned them . . . to no avail. And in the end, I explained, look, if they didn't move, they were going to be arrested and, at that point, they became quite abusive. They started making comments about my Hindu background and how I was a Hindu traitor and they started making comments towards my colleague . . . , who is of Afro-Caribbean descent . . . called him a black pussy hole, which was extremely offensive to him of course.<sup>32</sup>

Hamid at his trial said he was complying with the constables' requests as he was packing up and blamed the incident on Shakeel, who called the constable of Indian descent a "cow worshipper." They resisted arrest. Ibrahim tried to run away but was tripped up by a passerby and caught. The female constable wrestled Hamid to the ground as he was about to flee. As the police were dragging him into the van, he shouted, "I've got a bomb

and I'm going to blow you all up." Hamid later testified that, at the police station, "the sergeant asked me, 'What's your name and address?' so as a joke, I . . . said, my name is Osama bin London and I live at Tora Bora."<sup>33</sup> Ibrahim, Shakeel, and Hamid were all charged with a minor public order offense, released on bail, and told to return for their hearing in the Magistrates' Court on 18 December.

This incident split up Ibrahim and Shakeel from Hamid. As Hamid later recalled, "After being arrested, there was a big argument between Muktar [Ibrahim], Shakeel and myself. We all blamed each other for what had happened." After suspending their activities for Ramadan (15 October to 13 November 2004), Ibrahim and Shakeel started their own stall. Omar tried to patch things up between them but failed. "They decided to go their way," Hamid remembered, "and I went mine. . . . On occasion, they tried working at Marble Arch, but I told them it was my patch and they left."<sup>34</sup> Ibrahim and Shakeel never socialized with Hamid again.

Hamid's theatrics attracted the attention of BBC assistant producer Nasrin Suleaman, who was working on a documentary *Don't Panic, I'm Islamic*, examining discrimination against Muslims. At trial, Suleaman recalled, "I came out of the tube station at Marble Arch. . . . Mohammed [Hamid] has a stall there and I . . . [started] talking to him and . . . found him amiable and articulate and quite a character which are . . . prerequisites if you are making a television documentary. . . . So, I started talking to him about the possibility of appearing in the programme." She talked to her producer Phil Rees, who liked his sense of humor and his larger-than-life personality. "I went to see him at Speakers' Corner," she added, "where he again was on his soapbox and was robustly discussing political issues of the day with passers-by so I felt he was a man who, yes, had certain theatrical tendency perhaps, but as we say in the business was good copy, would make good television." Rees and Suleaman met with Hamid, who agreed to participate in the documentary. She remembered, "Mr. Hamid certainly felt victim to certain of these prejudices in the way he told us. He said that he may as well call himself Osama bin Laden because in his opinion most people passing the street would simply glance at him and would equate him with Osama bin Laden. He coined a phrase 'Osama bin London' . . . which I ran in the film. . . . It may not suit everybody's sense of humor but I took it as a humorous comment." Rees and she talked about how they were to present him in their documentary and decided, she testified, "that paintballing would be a very fun way of



introducing him.” They paid for the paintballing trip and gave Hamid £300 for his troubles.<sup>35</sup> The segment with Hamid was filmed in November–December 2004 and broadcast on the BBC in May 2005.

#### Going for Jihad in Afghanistan

During the fall of 2004, Ibrahim and Omar shared their respective disillusionment with nonviolent protests that failed to stop the killings of many Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan. Omar later testified, “I spoke to Ibrahim and told him there’s going to be some demonstration and Ibrahim looked at me and just laughed and said to me, ‘you’re still on that. Don’t you get the message? The government is not interested and forget it.’ So, at the end, I said to him, ‘But we have to somehow get the attention of the government and the public . . . [to] put some pressure on the government.’” In his testimony, Ibrahim recalled that he told Omar, “Don’t bother, they [the politicians] don’t listen.” Omar testified that he responded, “What if we do something that will stand out? . . . Carrying out a demonstration that would make people think there had been or were going to be some sort of explosion . . . something like fireworks or firecrackers, something that will make noise and . . . cause panic.” Ibrahim backed up his co-defendant’s testimony. He claimed that around November, at an Internet café, browsing the Web for news and dawah material, he stumbled upon a site, *tadjeed.net*, where he saw a video with “a person, who was speaking Arabic and wearing [a] balaclava and he was teaching how to make home-made explosive in detail. . . . He called it peroxide-based explosive. . . . I told Omar that we could use this for our demonstration, but I was thinking at that stage only to use a detonator. . . . Omar had a CD in his bag and so we downloaded the video on to the CD.”<sup>36</sup>

Their testimonies introduce the theory of their defense, namely that they just engaged in “hoax bombing” to bring attention to the Western massacre of Muslims abroad. Like the jury and judge at their trial, I am very skeptical about their claims. While videos on how to make bombs were available on the Internet at the time, the bombs were not hydrogen-peroxide-type bombs. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this type of bomb design was new for Europe. In his direct examination, Ibrahim implied that he already seemed familiar with bomb making as he spoke about detonators and boosters. Furthermore, no one except Ibrahim and Omar ever saw the CD, which they allegedly destroyed right before their

bombing attempt despite the fact that they did not destroy any of the other far more compromising material at Omar’s flat. Finally, the revelations of Rashid Rauf that surfaced after the trial disclosed that al Qaeda taught Ibrahim how to make this specific type of bomb in Pakistan in the winter of 2005, contradicting Ibrahim’s account. Despite his and Omar’s lies, I believe that their disillusionment with peaceful demonstrations against the war was genuine. Their conclusion that something more had to be done is consistent with all that we know about the evolution of this plot.

Meanwhile, Yahya left his bride in Yemen in mid-October and flew back to London on 16 October. At school, he befriended 22-year-old Saudi “Michael Bexhill” (an alias), of Yemeni descent. Bexhill and his family had visited their ancestral home several times, where, like other young teenagers, he learned to handle an assault rifle. As a teenager, he had stabbed an older man in his home allegedly in self-defense. In September 2001, he came to Britain on a student visa and, funded by his father, studied at various universities without ever finishing any of his courses. He was involved in a fight at school, for which he was taken to the police station but never charged. In June 2004, he moved to London. Yahya and he quickly became friends. Bexhill told Yahya that he needed a place to stay. Yahya suggested that he move in with Ibrahim for £60 a week, which he did at the end of October 2004.<sup>37</sup>

As Bexhill turned prosecution witness at trial, his five-week stay at Ibrahim’s Farley Road flat gives us a window into the internal dynamics of this group. His version is partially corroborated by Ishmail, who also turned on his co-defendants midway through the trial. Their political radicalism was not in dispute because of the mountain of evidence found at their respective flats. Instead, they accused each other of introducing these books, pamphlets, audiocassettes, videos, CDs, and DVDs into their respective flats. The defendants accused Bexhill of being a fanatic and introducing this radical material to them, while Bexhill accused them of trying to brainwash him. All agreed that Ishmail did not share their radical views. Bexhill’s memory gaps about the timing of events and his obvious attempts to exonerate himself marred his account. The evidence suggests that he was just as radical as his friends at the time.

Bexhill described Ibrahim as a “fanatic, radical. . . . He used to speak about jihad . . . be against those people who doesn’t [*sic*] like people doing jihad . . . watch a lot of movies, jihadi movies, and . . . listen to Abu Hamza tapes and Abdullah Faisal tapes.” The movies were about fighting in Bosnia,



Chechnya, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Ibrahim told Bexhill that he had been to the Sudan, trained there, and learned to fire an RPG.<sup>38</sup>

Bexhill met Shakeel, Omar, and Yahya, who occasionally came to visit and stay overnight. He described Omar as a fanatic, who tried to convince him to engage in jihad and carry out a suicide bombing. Ibrahim would also take Bexhill along to Omar's flat and they sometimes stayed there overnight. Overall, he saw Ibrahim, Omar, and Yahya almost every day. They all shared the same radical views. They watched jihadi videos together and talked about going abroad for jihad. Ibrahim and the visitors boasted that they had gone to a camp in the north to do some training, but without weapons, in order to prepare themselves to go for jihad in Afghanistan or Iraq. Bexhill, in turn, boasted that "all his friends . . . went to Iraq to fight and . . . he regretted that he didn't go and he still intended to go."<sup>39</sup>

Soon reality dampened their enthusiasm to fight abroad against Western coalition troops. Omar complained that his bad back prevented him from lifting anything heavy as would be required during jihad. Likewise, Yahya's bad knees prevented him from going on long walks. So Ibrahim asked Bexhill to take Omar and Yahya with him to Yemen, as he was familiar with the country and could get there without a visa, for them to learn how to use weapons, which were ubiquitous in that country. Omar and Yahya seemed interested in going and Yahya even asked Bexhill whether they could go together to fight in Iraq. Bexhill became noncommittal and said he first wanted to check with his family in Saudi Arabia before embarking on jihad. He gave Ibrahim his father's cell phone number as a Saudi contact for Ibrahim to call and facilitate his trip to Pakistan. This was clearly a one-way trip as Ibrahim did not expect to return to Britain.<sup>40</sup>

Shakeel and Rizwan Majid agreed to go with Ibrahim to fight in Afghanistan. Majid was a 21-year-old of Pakistani origin, born in Walthamstow. He used to hang around Al Quran and had participated in some of Hamid's weekend outings. He also occasionally came to Ibrahim's flat and Bexhill remembered him as an amusing fellow. As Ibrahim was preparing for his trip, he bought camping equipment and rented his flat to a Turkish couple, who paid two months' rent in advance, or £800, which Ibrahim used to pay his back rent. Bexhill moved out of Ibrahim's flat and into Yahya's flat for two days before returning to Saudi Arabia for vacation. He came back to Ibrahim's flat to collect his belongings. Omar answered the door but did

not invite him to come in and asked him to wait outside. Peeking past Omar, Bexhill saw 8 to 12 South Asian Muslims, dressed in traditional gowns and wearing long beards, holding a good-bye party. He recognized Shakeel and Majid among them. Ibrahim came out with Bexhill's belongings and gave him a ride back to Yahya's flat. Bexhill later recalled that, in his good-bye, Ibrahim "said that if we did not meet up again in this world, we will meet up in paradise." As a parting gift, Ibrahim gave Bexhill two jihadi videos, one about Afghanistan and the other about 9/11. Bexhill flew back home on 8 December.<sup>41</sup>

On 11 December 2004, a two-car convoy led by an Iraqi immigrant cab driver drove Ibrahim, Shakeel, and Majid to Heathrow Airport. The cabbie, who was a known collector of funds for the insurgency in Iraq, allegedly knew that this was a terrorism-related trip.<sup>42</sup> The travelers had gotten their Pakistani visas the day before and their £520 round-trip plane tickets had a return date of 8 March 2005. They had shaved their beards and wore Western garments to appear inconspicuous but still underwent a comprehensive screening at the airport. Ibrahim carried in excess of £2,000 in cash. He had antimalarial medication and vitamin supplements, a first aid kit, a cold weather sleeping bag, and a brand-new video camera. Majid was carrying £2,200 in cash along with a sleeping bag, cold weather outfit, military first aid kit, and a first aid manual covering ballistic injuries. Shakeel had approximately £3,000 cash on him and a first aid manual annotated with notes relating to injuries inflicted by bullet or blast.

They were interviewed for four hours. They claimed they were going to Pakistan for Majid's wedding but admitted they did not know the bride. They were going to be housed by Majid's family and intended to stay in Pakistan for about 20 days. Ibrahim downplayed his piety and said he did not attend mosque regularly. "When I asked how it was that an unemployed man was so bereft of time," recalled an airport security official, "he again made light of the question in such way as to suggest that he is in regular, gainful employment. A little more probing about the extent to which his faith was important to him revealed a sensitive streak about the singling out of Muslims for security examinations, such as one that he was being subjected to." The interviews or the questioning at trial never clarified how unemployed people like them raised so much money for their trip to Pakistan. I suspect that one of the purposes of the send-away party at his flat was to raise money from their militant friends. The interviews caused them to miss their flight and they flew out the next day.<sup>43</sup>



### Ibrahim's Training with al Qaeda in Pakistan

The three friends stayed at Majid's family home in Pakistan. Rashid Rauf, the al Qaeda intermediary, waited for about two weeks before contacting them. It is not known how Rauf got the phone number of Majid's family. However, right before their departure, Ibrahim received a phone call from Abdulla Ahmed Ali's brother. As reported in the next chapter, Ali was already in Pakistan at the time and had already met Rauf. Ali's family and Majid's family were friends in Walthamstow.<sup>44</sup>

This time, Rauf's caution paid off as British police had notified the ISID, which came to Majid's family home and questioned them shortly after their arrival. When Rauf contacted them, they told him about the police scrutiny. Rauf instructed them to behave as if they were about to attend a wedding, consistent with their cover story. They wanted to train and fight U.S. forces in Afghanistan. They did not want to ever return to Britain because they believed they had been detected by British authorities and hoped to die as martyrs in Afghanistan.<sup>45</sup>

After another interval, Rauf picked them up and, after careful surveillance detection that lasted several days, took them to the tribal areas of Pakistan to meet his boss, Abu Ubaydah al Masri. They did not attend the same camp as the London bombers and got a different instructor. Their instructions on how to build a bomb were quite different from those of the London bombers. Instead of a hydrogen peroxide-black pepper mixture, their main charge was a hydrogen peroxide-chapati mixture. Instead of a HMTD detonator, they learned to build one using triacetone triperoxide (TATP). However, the overall design of the respective improvised explosive devices was the same. The tricky part of the manufacture process was the same: the concentration of the hydrogen peroxide to 70 percent so that a detonator containing five to eight grams of TATP could ignite it. Again, the British students had to learn the process of concentrating the hydrogen peroxide at altitude, in the mountains of the FATA, in very harsh winter conditions and very low humidity. These three elements—atmospheric pressure, temperature, and humidity—affect the evaporation of hydrogen peroxide and the stability of the explosive mixture. The conditions in London are very different than in the FATA.<sup>46</sup>

Toward the end of their training, the students tested two small devices they had manufactured, just as the London bombers had done, but something went wrong. As Shakeel and Majid went to put the devices down for

testing, the bombs exploded prematurely, killing them. Ibrahim had stayed behind at a distance with Abu Ubaydah. He was deeply affected by the deaths of his friends. Before, he had been reluctant to conduct an operation in Britain, but, after their deaths, Abu Ubaydah was able to persuade him to carry out "operational work" there.

Rauf liked Sidique more than Ibrahim and spent more time with the former than the latter. This was to have very important consequences. After Ibrahim's training, Rauf met him back in Islamabad. As with Sidique, he spent time with Ibrahim creating a secure communication plan, using code words and different modes of communication. Ibrahim recorded his wasiya (martyrdom tape) just as the London bombers did. Rauf quizzed him on what he had learned and found out that Ibrahim had not quite mastered the bomb-making techniques. However, it was too late to fill his knowledge gaps because of his scheduled return to Britain. Delaying him further might have triggered more suspicion from British authorities. Rauf blamed his lack of preparation on the quality of Ibrahim's instructor.<sup>47</sup>

Ibrahim's lack of expertise was compounded by his lack of bonding with Rauf. When Ibrahim got back to Britain, he called Rauf immediately after landing, telling him he was safe. However, this was his last call and there was no further contact between them. Rauf later sent an intermediary<sup>48</sup> to contact Ibrahim, who promised he would soon get back to Rauf. But he never did. This lack of communication prevented Rauf from telling him about the types of problems that the London bombers had experienced, especially about the difficulty of measuring the concentration of hydrogen peroxide. As a result, Ibrahim never compensated for this decrease in concentration in the main charge, leading to its failure to detonate. Rauf concluded, "It was their lack of technical knowledge that caused the problem."<sup>49</sup> But we are getting ahead of our account.

At his trial, Ibrahim claimed that Majid, Shakeel, and he played tourists during three months and, at the end, his two friends stayed behind while he returned to England. He did not keep in touch with them, did not know where they were, and denied they ever attended a terrorist training camp.<sup>50</sup> This rings hollow in view of subsequent events and Rauf's report.

### Meanwhile in London

Hamid showed up for the hearing on 18 December at the Magistrates' Court, but since Ibrahim and Shakeel were absent, the hearing was



postponed to 19 January 2005. Hamid called Ibrahim's phone three days before that date and a stranger responded not to call up that number again. The next day, Hamid texted and tried to call Omar but got no response. Hamid went to Shakeel's house and Shakeel's father told him that his son had gone on hajj. Hamid told the court that he had lost touch with his co-defendants and was convicted of the minor public order offense but did not receive any prison time. On 14 February, the court sent a letter to Ibrahim at his flat telling him to turn himself in before the police came for him. On 28 February, a second letter urged to him "come to us before we come for you."<sup>51</sup>

In Saudi Arabia, Bexhill told his father about his new friends and their political views. His alarmed father told him not to associate anymore with them and sent him to Saudi scholars, who told him that his friends' ideas were wrong and followed the ideology of al Qaeda, Abu Hamza, and Omar Abdel Rahman (the blind sheikh). They told him that these people were against Islam and recommended that he listen instead to the lectures of Sheikh Abdal Aziz bin Baz, the most respected Saudi cleric, and Sheikh Yusuf al Qaradawi, an Egyptian preacher on al Jazeera. They both condemned suicide bombings and attacks on civilians, but supported Palestinian fighters against Israel and, for Qaradawi, resistance to Western occupation in Iraq.<sup>52</sup>

In London, Mohamed and Hamdi introduced their respective partners to each other, who became close friends. Mohamed had reconciled with Azeb when she converted to Islam, started praying, and began wearing conservative Muslim attire. They were planning on getting married. He moved into a council flat at Dalgarno Gardens in early 2005 while she kept her place.<sup>53</sup> After a short trip to Saudi Arabia, Hamdi was back with Girma in December 2004 when she gave birth to their third son. At trial, Girma attempted to distance herself from her partner. She claimed that he had gotten married in Saudi Arabia, which made her very upset and caused a rift between them. However, there was no evidence that Hamdi ever called Saudi Arabia after he came back. He was constantly listening to audiocassettes by the radical preachers Anwar al Awlaki, Abdullah al Faisal, and Abu Hamza and viewing videos about 9/11, Osama bin Laden, fighting in Afghanistan, Iraq, and beheadings. Girma denied that she knew anything about them, but her trial demonstrated that they tried to get rid of this large amount of material bearing both of their fingerprints by taking it to a friend's flat the night before the bombing attempts. At her flat, a tape was

left in her player entitled *The Rules of Jihad*. Her computer contained documents calling on Muslims to fight the jihad in Palestine and Afghanistan and discussing martyrdom and the Beslan massacre in Russia.<sup>54</sup>

The large collection of material found at their friend's flat included books by Abu Hamza, dozens of cassettes containing lectures by Anwar al Awlaki, 30 by Abu Hamza, and even more by Abdullah al Faisal.<sup>55</sup> One of al Faisal's lecture entitled *History Repeats Itself* was summarized at her trial: "The only way forward for Muslims is martyrdom operations. Describes democracy as the devil's religion used to combat Islam. . . . In reference to 9/11, a member of the audience says, 'all the people killed were homosexuals, adulterers and rapists and needed to be killed anyway. How can we help the Taliban, shall we go and fight?' Speaker states he should go and fight. He then goes on to say that many people worry about kafir kids being killed in explosions but explains that it is a mercy for them to die as, if they lived to be adults, they would grow to be drug dealers, takers, prostitutes and homosexuals. . . . 'The only holiday for a Muslim is to go [to] jihad training.'"<sup>56</sup>

Hamdi's collection of extremist material was by far the largest of all the people involved in this case. His fingerprints on it left no doubt that this was his collection and indicated that Hamdi was perhaps the most dedicated radical of the defendants. In fact he was the only defendant at the trial who refused to give evidence on his own behalf, which counts against the defendant in England, unlike in the United States. Girma tried her best to distance herself from him, claiming he did not live with her, despite the fact that he was always at her flat and had his possessions and clothes there, and they socialized together as a family. Her denials sounded hollow and she was eventually convicted at her separate trial.

Bexhill returned to England on 6 January 2005 and disobeyed his father by renting a room from Yahya for £60 a week. Omar, Ishmail, and occasionally Dixon would stop by. Omar still did not believe that the 9/11 attacks had been carried out by Muslims and Bexhill showed him a video with bin Laden and some of the hijackers to prove to him that al Qaeda had done it. After his return, Bexhill became assertive in defending his understanding that terrorist attacks were not permitted in Islam and referred Omar to bin Baz and Qaradawi. Omar responded with a tape by Abdullah Faisal, *The Devils of the Saudi Salafists*, rejecting these preachers as dollar scholars. Bexhill still strongly supported the Afghan and Iraqi fighters against the allied troops and simply disagreed with his friends about al